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No.

STRAFFORD — SORDELLO



SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

(*Drawing by Evelyn Paul*)

"Yet back — from Mantuan Albert making cease
The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace
Yonder!" — SORDELLO.

Robert Browning's Complete Works

VOLUME II



NEW YORK
FRED DeFAU & COMPANY
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STRAFFORD—SORDELLO

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

From the Author's Revised Text

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY BY

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INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES BY CHARLOTTE PORTER AND HELEN A. CLARKE

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INTRODUCTION

DIFFERENT as "Strafford" and "Sordello" are in scene and style, they have an important bond of inward unity; and that is the relating of the central characters in both works, at crucial epochs of social evolution, to political movements on which the liberation and advancement of the people depend.

A momentous issue for modern England hangs in the balance in "Strafford," waiting upon the wills of two men, one of whom distrusts the capacity of the people and champions the authority of the king, while the other sets his faith upon the rising power of the people of England with the fervor of a prophet showing forth the way to a Promised Land.

A period of ferment equally critical for the future of European civilization is disclosed in "Sordello," and upon the will of its hero rests the advancement of humanity at a juncture so singularly favorable for his action that never again did so opportune a moment befall. What Dante dreamed might be done and had no power to do, his forerunner had vision to conceive, sudden power thrust upon him to do, but not force enough to effect.

Pym wrestled with such a fatal moment for England's future, in "Strafford." From the angel of time he wrung a victory which solaced his torn heart and yet endures for the peace of England.

The fatal moment for Italy's future Sordello held between his hesitating hands till the auspicious act looked black with personal temptation and was thrust beneath his foot, with the last flare of will his smouldering life could summon. For that sole insufficiency fair Italy, although she has held the torch for all Europe, herself scarcely yet walks erect and free among her sister-nations. The drama of that victory for England, the story of that lost opportunity for Italy, are not unfitly joined together in this volume.

In "Paracelsus" Browning had already sounded the depths of the call of life upon the powers of the human soul when educing it to know and to love. Taking, in Paracelsus, a man whose pioneering life-work typified the ardor of the intellect which impels the modern scientific movement; and in Aprile, a poet whose glowing heart prefigured the spiritual compassion which swells the tide still mounting toward a more democratic art, the poet revealed what exhaustless impulsion for human development springs from Knowledge and Love. These two elements he conceived, however, and embodied in his creatures, not as philosophical abstractions, but as fountains of force slumbering in every man's breast till he awake them to refresh the arid work of the world.

Having worked out so large a theme as this, he now, at the ripe age of twenty-three, turned to a huger and a subtler one; for shortly after completing "Paracelsus," he began "Sordello," although he did not finish it till after "Strafford" was done. He undertook in this to double the difficulties of his first *tour de force*, which dealt with the secrets of the Intellect and the Emotional Nature, by ex-

emplifying with a like vividness the play of the third great elementary human motive-power, — the Will. This he showed in the development of a soul as devoted to the craving to will as Paracelsus was to the desire to know, or Aprile to the yearning to love. The hero he chose, moreover, being famed as Knight and Lover as well as Minstrel, concentrated in his single person the intellectual activity and the emotional susceptibility, both as poet and lover, before divided between a Paracelsus and an Aprile. With all this dower upon his head, to which his peculiar bent — delight in the exercise of will — is added, he is posed in history so as to make his gifts as minstrel or possible man of action not matters of development by themselves alone, nor merely of cross-relationship the one with the other, but of continual conscious readjustment under external social friction. Finally, by way of climax, his evolved gifts and will are tested upon a decision of large political significance, or, as Browning himself sums up the life-experience he has assigned to his Sordello,

> "Here is a soul whom, to affect,
> Nature has plied with all her means, from trees
> And flowers e'en to the Multitude! — and these,
> Decides he save or no?"

Humanity is made Sordello's companion-player on the stage of his life, so that the poem rightly conceived is not so metaphysical as is commonly supposed, but is virtually an experiment in the evolution of a poet and potential statesman by contact with the social world and popular needs lying outside of his individual nature.

If in "Paracelsus," Browning's poem of Mind

and Heart, the scheme of evolution unfolded was concerned with human origins, in "Sordello," his poem of Will, the scheme was pushed a step farther, and dealt with social processes. With "Sordello" this first initiatory period of Browning's poetic work closes. This poem, with "Paracelsus," and the kindred fragment, "Pauline," supply the fundamental principles whence his after work flows. With whatever amplification or modification here or there may be needed, the later poems proceed from this early period; in its light the student will ever turn to read them, since the groundwork of his evolutionary philosophy both of human origins and the organization of social relations was so broadly laid that it could scarcely be transcended in a lifetime.

With this fundamental group of poems "Strafford" is linked through "Sordello." Like it, a work bearing on social processes plotted and shaped by the wills of the main actors at a crucial period of a nation's growth, it was saved by its dramatic form from the historical and rhetorical obscurities and the baffling complexities of Sordello's double nature, which have helped to prevent his story from being read aright.

The circumstances attending the projection and first performance of "Strafford" are elsewhere recorded (see the Biographical Introduction in the first volume of this edition, pp. xix–xxi). The opening for the play was lucky, but the sequence so unfavorable for an effective production of the work that the auspicious play, clear in diction, lively of dialogue, happy in familiarity and momentousness of subject for an English stage, was blocked at the opening of its path with shadowy

obstacles of mistrust and prejudice, whose emptiness as affecting the play itself is not yet quite clear to the general reader.

There is always enough of originality in Browning's artistic treatment of any subject to make it necessary to approach his design with an attentive brain and an open sympathy. These being granted for "Strafford," the liveliness with which the political action of that epoch is reconstructed will have its own way. To enjoy the play is to see that the fate of England, looming uncertainly at the threshold of the first act, and taking a grim step over Strafford's head at the close of the last act, is made dramatically possible, human through and through, and never for an instant either static or abstract, primarily by its identification with the success or failure of Strafford, secondarily by the interweaving of human loves and hates, human schemes and counterplots, as in the actual social life surrounding an event to which its wisest historian rarely penetrates. Against Strafford, fearing his ability, the leaders of the Faction collect and conspire. Hoping to win him over to their side, his fond foe, Pym, first restrains and then lets loose, and finally leads the united opposition of the People's Party, carrying on thus the main movement of the drama duly, step by step. Jealous of his mastery, the Court party also buzzes and bustles, undermines and intrigues against that control of the King's favor without which Strafford's stanchest efforts on behalf of Charles fall blunted and broken. All these small activities of the Court but enrich the lifelikeness of the action, and reinforce the main plot, of which Pym is the head. Strafford, isolated, fighting a giant in the dark, illuminating the gloom

of his predestined defeat with the splendor of his ambition, the beauty of his antique virtue of loyalty at all hazards to his liege, shines like the last lone star before the dawn of a new day. This English Roland at an English Roncesvalles, where the fate of the English Charlemagne was forever sealed, is lavishly but not injudiciously given all the charm that clings about a lost cause. It but enhances the stupidity that turned Strafford's brilliancy into gross dulness. The blunder at the start that made all his clear calculation of the political problem of his time rest upon the false premise of the priority of the one over the many, is the fatal flaw which, by contrast, makes Pym's steadfast faith in the supremacy of the many a surpassing excellence. A beauty of character, divination, mastership, lures all eyes to Pym at the close of the play, leading them, while tears still linger in them for Strafford's sake, to see in Pym the embodiment of England's will, and to make the pitiful scaffold scene the more moving with the purgation of pity by a transcendent ecstasy of purpose.

The characters of the lesser men of Pym's party are brought out vividly in the opening scene. The younger Vane, impetuous and hasty yet with the keen insight and broad views not often credited to one of his enthusiasm; the headlong Rudyard; the calm but immovable Hampden; the thoroughly cautious Pym, most conservative and English of Liberals, who takes no step a new way till all older ways prove ineffective, and then pushes for the practical solution of the pending difficulty, — all these personages are effectively differentiated amid the excitement of the stealthy gathering which is

only restrained by Hampden and Pym from becoming a hot conspiracy against Wentworth.

Lady Carlisle, in her almost unacknowledged affection for the Earl, who accepts her devoted service as but an incident contributing usefully to swell the current of his larger love for the King, is at first sight an impossible character. Hers is a curious position to put an attractive woman in, and the reader's first impression may be that she is not more closely connected with the dramatic design of the play than the "confidants" of the French drama whose main use often seems to be to stand ornamentally like human jugs with large ears conveniently receiving the outpourings of the prime actors. Lady Martin, whose rendering of the part was much admired when the play was first performed, is quoted by Miss Emily H. Hickey, in her admirable little edition of "Strafford," as replying to the request that she write a few words about the character as follows: "It is drawn so firmly and clearly that I feel it almost a wrong to my friend Mr. Browning to attempt to put my own idea of it into such words as one unaccustomed, like myself, to write on such things, can command. All I can say is, that I think Mr. Browning set himself a very difficult task in drawing a woman, full of love and devotion to a man who, while he could not help being grateful for such devotion to his interests, and attracted by her charms as a woman, yet was so engrossed by personal and political adversaries that he gives little or no sign of a reciprocal affection. There was great danger in working out this idea, and placing Lady Carlisle at a disadvantage; for little sympathy is shown for a woman who shows her love, and meets only the

coldest return. But over this difficulty the poet has, I think, triumphed. Among the other characters, of whom so many are selfish, headstrong, weak, or wayward, she seems to me to stand out in striking colors, such are the clearness of her perceptions, the fearlessness of her courage, the depth and nobleness of her love."

Over this difficulty, thinks Lady Martin, the poet has triumphed. Those who are inclined to agree with her will be interested in noticing just how this triumph has been attained. In the first scene wherein she appears the combined susceptibility and tact is noticeable with which she meets Wentworth's irritable consciousness of the difficulties of his position. Amid the carping of the Court and the execrations of the people, he is serving a master who is helping his foes by not yet vouchsafing to trust him. Throughout the scene she is intelligently alive to all this, and she helps him continuously by giving him the needful hints as to the turn of things at Court, while wounding him no more than is inevitable by her manner of giving him light. Her patience with his abruptness elicits the apology for his peevishness which she rewards with an extreme expression of devotion (I. ii. 87). This draws from him an equivocal exclamation, "Heartless!" The tone must be left to the actor. Here, as elsewhere in "Strafford," the reader needs as much imaginative art as the skilful actor to interpret the word with the right vitality. Clews to the poet's meaning are, of course, not lacking, but the bare words clearly require, as in all good dramatic work, the tone and accent of vivid realization. Lady Carlisle, like all Court beauties, was reputed heartless. The very fine-

ness of her mental perceptions and her exacting taste joined with her beauty would lay her open as a woman to the charge of heartlessness in any age, still more so in the seventeenth century. The tell-tale letter from Voiture given in the notes of this volume is warrant enough of the repute in which this "Helen of the North," as Dryden called her, was held in her own day. To this reputation of heartlessness Wentworth's exclamation refers. Against it he breaks out, with the by-play a good actor would know how to put in: What? She heartless who has just so heartened him! Having uttered so much in good earnest, it is natural to slight his sudden sincerity a little in the next breath. Such fencing is common enough after a man has pinned his honest thought upon his sleeve. For fear the daws may peck at it he hurries to unpin it with his "but all are heartless here," — at Court, that is. "Go now" follows, to make amends again. With her expression of her devotion she has so put heart in him, despite his annoyances, that he can turn with some energy toward his difficulties and the pending interview with the King. Slight as the scene is and mainly turned to throw light on Wentworth and not on her, the clew is thrown out that here is an English woman so attractive and fearless that gossip calls her heartless, but really with unusual sensibility and liveliness of mind and an acute interest in the politics of her time, who is playing such a part inside a great contemporaneous movement as only French women are commonly supposed to have the wit or charm or chance to play. With this clew to follow, the next scene in which Lady Carlisle appears is more luminous, not only as to her character

and quality, but also as to her position as a factor of the drama. It there comes out that she is really the very source of the whole action; for, as Browning has conceived the situation, she has had the insight to single out the untried Yorkshire baron as a man of uncommon force, as the one man able to get the King out of his straits. So to her, apparently, instead of to Weston or any other courtier, or to his own untempted ambitious aspirations, has he owed the personal introduction to the King's private favor which all the rest of the Court is fighting against. It is but an example of the way such things go in life that it is not a prominent fact in the action, although inwardly so important. Wentworth himself may scarcely be aware how much his career owes to the subtle indirect management of Lucy Percy; while she is made doubly conscious of the part she has played by the unwonted stirrings of her own heart.

The love for him which has overpowered her political design now makes her desire to undo her own work. Instead of the image of the King which her skill has made attractive, she would reveal to him that which has really had power over him — her own soul. Besides, she alone in the whole Court sees clearly and without delusion. Although depreciating, naturally enough, the power Pym's "Faction" has to thwart Strafford's plans, she is more alive than the Earl to the peril he runs of being entrapped by the Court "Cabal" and betrayed by the King himself. For love of Strafford she would now let him see what part she has played in leading him to befriend the Royal Cause, and show him Charles's real nature. With this impulse she begins to speak. For love of him she would save

him. Then, checked at the outset by her own discernment of the depth of his love for the King, she refrains from speaking. For love of him she resolves to "let him love the King and die." After this, her subordinate rôle is a matter of course, a self-determined helplessness. To watch and wait, assist and warn and solace, is all she can do. She is a Cassandra who divines the future by the assistance of a god within her — her intuition; and this god does not so wholly control her that she despairs. Instead of raving, this modern Cassandra hopes against hope, and plans at last a futile rescue. So conceived, the part Lady Carlisle has to play can scarcely fail to triumph over its disadvantages of ignored love and thankless wit.

The light but not dull quality of the Queen, and the inadequacy of her heart, because of her artificial training as a queen of pleasure, to feel the weight of the situation for any one but herself, is all that the dramatic situation requires for her.

For the King, too, what play of individuality can have its way does have its way in Browning's Charles, through the crust of artificial isolation and selfishness which the nature of kings must always suffer at the hand of the humanity that chooses to set them aloof for the reception of toy honors. And while his alternate compassion and carelessness for Strafford are alike shown to arise from the pressure of events upon his self-interest, it is plain enough that he is tortured at the last into permitting Strafford's death in sheer self-defence, a sort of homicide generally considered justifiable in any man, and not less so in this King's case, whose point of view, fostered most by his victim, Strafford himself, was that the utmost service of

his loyal subjects was but his royal prerogative.

The courtier group is slightly but effectively sketched. With more rancor, and political astuteness too, though of the same superficial overreaching variety, their mental equipment qualifies them to be classed with the courtiers created a few years later for the little comedy of "Colombe's Birthday."

The Impeachment and Trial Scenes of the play are notably original pieces of dramatic workmanship. They are modelled in close keeping with the design to make the play resuscitate an important period of popular ferment from which the fatal hand of the English people emerged bearing the sword of doom. Like the hand above the flood bearing the magic brand Excalibur, in the old Arthurian romance, its command was resistless. Behind Pym and his Faction were the seething masses of frowning Presbyterians, strenuous Puritans, sober-purposed property-holders, and uprisen yeomen, bent on opening the door to an era already storming at the portal. The selfish light wits of the old day, however graceful and winsome, with whatsoever man of misdirected force at their head, like Strafford, could scarcely stem that flood of moral heat and national energy bent on decreeing its own channel. Browning, conceiving these two great scenes not as portraying a personal contest between ornamental individualities, but as the expression of a social crisis of which Pym was the mouthpiece and Strafford the antagonist, has used even more boldly and freely the sort of dramaturgy Shakespeare essayed and proved the worth of in his employment of the rabble in "Julius Cæsar."

He has made the stage-action not merely individual but multitudinous. The voices of the people clash out in the dialogue, and overshadow and authorize the action. England's will works England's fate upon Strafford at Pym's hands.

"Strafford," simple, familiar, and purely dramatic in form, helps one to see that "Sordello" tells in its complex, obscure, and different way a similar story. England's will was real, Italy's supposititious. Pym follows a clear reading, in external act. Sordello arrives guessingly at the expression of a social desire, after many stages of inward development which were influenced by his conception of the needs of himself and the people about him. And in the end he made a decision, merely, where Pym enacted a continuous policy consummated in an effective deed. Pym succeeded; Sordello failed. Still a political issue dependent upon personal will is the gist both of "Strafford" and "Sordello," and sets the two poems side by side as companion-works disclosing the political enthusiasm and the democratic conception of the rise and progress of modern civilization which animated the young poet's social outlook.

It is a misfortune that — as the poet's remarks in the exordium seem to prove — some special censure of his dramatic cast of composition in "Paracelsus" influenced his choice of a narrative form for "Sordello." The poet's bias to externalize his ideas is so strong that, like Silas Wegg, whose proneness to poetry was irresistible, Browning every little while will "drop into" drama. The reader is required to skip about in imagination, trying to keep pace not so much with the expression as with the points of view whence the expres-

sion arises; and to follow the course of a poem nominally narrative through bewildering chequers and variegations broidered in it, by means of dramatic insets and episodes, sudden lyric bursts put in the mouths of the characters, splashes of rough-painted description, and interludes of humorous personal comment. This complexity of style, rather than of thought or diction merely, is usually the reader's puzzle. Other characteristics of the poem are a lightning acuteness playing over mental massiveness; a plan too large in vista and too concentrated subjectively on the stage of a single character's development to be obvious or coherent, in spite of a great deal of honest painstaking to make the thread plain and continuous. Moreover, the poem presents, with relation to Dante's political views, a historical chaos of mediævalism over which the creative spirit of the young Victorian breathed ardently but mystically, perforce.

The perplexities so caused account for the pathetic fact that "Sordello" has been ignored and abused; read mosaic-wise, or misread, or, at best, half read. The development of the mediæval poet's soul was indeed understood to constitute the subject of the story; but the part played by the claims of the social life upon the evoking of that soul, and the statesman-like significance of its political failure and personal success in the decision at the close of the story were simply not followed. Yet only budding genius of the largest kind could so masterfully have conceived a poem to be so elaborately misconceived.

A dramatic form would have set a good deal of this complexity into order and balance. The nar-

rative form chosen brings the student amends, however, in this way: it unveils Browning's own personal point of view. And this certifies to his social design in the uncertain social half of the poem. In the digression in the third book, markedly, the poet speaks in his own person, expressing his personal enthusiasm for the advancement of the overlooked masses of humanity. From such sympathetic soil the poem sprang with bewildering wealth and strength of branching interlacing boughs.

It may be guessed that at this point, at the third book, he returned to "Sordello" after writing "Strafford," and took up again his "almost blunted purpose." He pursued his task with a cooler brain and the wider historic and philosophic gaze acquired by his study, in Italy itself, of the people and the vexed period, accounts of which he had pored over earlier in dusty tomes at the British Museum, with the fumes of Shelley's too bright visions of an absolute social Paradise in his head. He has, meantime, grown too hard-headed to accept those visions without a characteristic modification, — namely, that retention of evil with good which is necessary for personal progress. He asks now, therefore, for humanity, not happiness, but the opportunity to gain happiness, — the open road free of obstacles for the unshackled progress of every soul on its own way. With this revision of his purpose, he vows himself anew to obey as poet throughout his life-work the whisper that came to him of old, —

> "'Let others seek! — thy care
> Is found, thy life's provision; if thy race
> Should be thy mistress, and into one face
> The many faces crowd?'"

It is characteristic of Browning to make his allusions fall in with his design appropriately, and it is significant that the poets he names at the outset of "Sordello" are, like his hero, warrior-bards or poets with double interests, poetical and political, — Shelley, Æschylus, Sidney, Dante, and later, a poet living at the time, Landor. Shelley, whose pure spirit he begs to withdraw and leave him space to pursue his plan without abashment, is doubtless the poet who first fired the young Browning's ardor for social regeneration. But to Dante, as he especially declares, he owes the suggestion as to Sordello out of which he weaves his poem; and to Dante's dreams of the unification and healing of the life of the people of Italy by the power of the Holy Roman Empire his conception of Sordello's great opportunity and failure distinctly refers.

"Sordello," "Caliban," and "Fifine at the Fair" are the rare poems built upon a notion originating with a great predecessor, with Dante, Shakespeare, Molière. To mention them is to indicate how rare they are, and how in each case the germinal idea has been taken as a starting-point for wide departure. In the case of "Sordello," a great deal of poetic invention seems to enter into the very perception of Dante's hints. Browning's fancy apparently caught at the manner in which Dante describes Sordello, throughout cantos vi.–ix. of the "Purgatory." He is alone, and free to wander through the ante-Purgatory region. His dignity; his mystery in giving no reply to their questions about his past life; Dante's own outburst of enthusiasm for Italy and Imperialism just after meeting him and telling of his homage to Virgil;

the fact that Sordello is their guide onward through the valley of the gentle-born, where he shows them the emperors and leaders whose negligence has withheld them from Paradise, but where at ease in a delectable country they await that which Sordello tells them of, the coming of the new day, and the expected deliverance from the Great Snake, — such hints as these to pique and lead the imagination were all Dante supplied. These yielded a better basis to build upon, however, for a poet like Browning, than one more explicit. Sordello's story? That which Dante left untold was left to him eagerly to imagine. The praise of his hero in Dante's "De Vulgari Eloquentia," as having created the Italian language, but sharpened his characteristic interest in a pioneer worker obscurely concerned in the initiation of movements later becoming illustrious. The poetical side and the political side of his troubadour-knight were thus vaguely supplied him.

Sordello was gallant, too, as well as minstrel and knight, and chronicles enough had rumored of his alliance with Richard Boniface's betrothed, the sister of the last Ecelin. Here, even, where Dante gave him no direct clew, he yet offered him material in the description of this lady, under the name of Cunizza, in Paradise, as devoted to the service of love. Of this Browning makes the utmost, and clothing it with the warm hue of mediæval chivalry, as was most fitting, he covered all further lacks by linking his Palma in a relation to Sordello akin to that between Dante and Beatrice. That the relation is a more secular one, suiting a very different design from Dante's, is a matter of course. Among the little lyrics which variegate and confuse the

pattern of this ingenious poetical web, what is more charming than the sudden lilt from Palma's throat, a quaint and troubadourish conceit, fashioned like the time, — another of Browning's æsthetic originalities of appropriate ornamentation, — with which she confesses her long-nourished girl's love?

> "'Waits he not the waking year?
> His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe
> By this; to welcome him, fresh runnels stripe
> The thawed ravines; because of him, the wind
> Walks like a herald. I shall surely find
> Him now!'"

Not only to personal love, but to strenuous social action did Palma seek to win Sordello. She yearned to occupy herself through him with the large career her ardor was capable of shaping. She incited and energized his blind social sympathies, wooing her "out-soul" with words as wise as they were lulling.

This third element of the poem, Palma's relation with Sordello, which reinforced the effect of the general social life upon his will, is by no means unimportant, as writers on "Sordello" by their omission of it or slighting references to it seem to imply.

A rapid review of the outcome of the different stages of Sordello's life may now help to show how the poet has blent his various running threads of interest one after the other until they are all knit into one issue — Sordello's decision.

The nascent artist with his evolving will toward happiness, to be found in the exercise of his gifts as poet and leader, learns in his solitude at Goito,

by the very absence of social life about him, how his own life presupposes it and hungers for it, needs it for his own mere self-display. Then, after the first flush of his mastery over other men and before Palma, he learns how the general social life outmasters his single life. The retreat within himself for encouragement and criticism, and the subservience to other men for reward or artistic guidance in his poetic work, are equally unsatisfying. Art for art's sake is for him impossible. Life for art's sake is now found unsatisfying, thwarting either life or art. Nature and loneliness call him back to lull his craving soul in a sleep of mere pleasant sensation. But no longer can he be held in quiescence. Life has bitten him, and he grows conscious that only death can cure the will to live. Life for life's sake cries within him. Here Palma's voice calls him to social action. Her plans, her force can supply the needed direction and impetus for his will, as Adelaide's projects and desires had wielded and kept in play Ecelin and Taurello; as Beatrice had shaped and aimed glowingly Dante's spiritual capacity. But now, for the first time subordinating himself, he for the first time learns what the actual aspect of the life outside him is. If his art or skill as leader is to be for life's sake, he must learn the nature and harms and needs of the society about him in mediæval Italy. As soon as his sympathy has grasped the ruthless conditions under which the indistinguished mass of men lives, he realizes that the selective process which has been the main principle of his own art and pleasure in life misrepresents life; and life as it is, differentiated in various personalities, no one of which can exclusively stand for any other, he now desires to

free and help towards its utmost expansion and development. This can be done, obviously, through differently aimed artistic and social ways of working than those he had before conceived. No longer can he separate himself as an isolated being from the life of others. Life that feeds art and action must be equally fed by them. Some mode of action that will nourish and assist the general life is no longer a benevolence but a necessity of will. The two jarring principles that divide all Italy into Guelf and Ghibellin can neither of them satisfy his broad brotherliness.

Dante's own social dreams or the conception of the empire as a holy office for the impartial government of all men for their good, which filled the Middle Ages with impossible visions, Browning makes Sordello pass by, and seize instead upon quite another conception of Rome as a socialistic New Jerusalem. This was no unauthorized fantasy. Alongside of the better known and more popular notion of the renovation of the world through a Cæsar, peeped out from time to time through the Middle Ages the social dream derived from the old Greek democracy, as it was handed down through the mediation of Roman civilization in the Roman republic of the days before the Cæsars. All students of the rise of modern civilization know the curious little list of Republican leaders who would have planted the ægis of a new republic in Italy, carrying healing beneath her wings for all the woes of the people. There was Crescentius, who actually gave Rome golden order for almost two decades of a troublous century; Arnold of Brescia, a century later; Rienzi in the fourteenth century; Porcaro in the fifteenth. They

justify Browning's representation of Sordello's dream as historically valid and appropriate; and the poet has cleverly made the story of Crescentius supply Sordello with the righteous cause to challenge the world for which he sought.

The remaining stages of Sordello's career were occupied, first, in attempting to convince the man of action to whom he had access that he, Taurello, must build up Rome as a refuge for all men; and then, in the harder attempt, to apply to himself, put in the very position that he supposed Taurello held, the responsibility to enact the social good his dreams devised.

The hero of those large historic syntheses — masterly handfuls of the scope of social evolution through successive generations, alone enough to make "Sordello" notable — which Browning makes the voice of Sordello's daimon whisper in his ear (in the fifth book) was not so much the lord over his own soul that he could keep it now from falling into the pitfall of a merely individual hunger and thirst for the pleasure of possessing Palma's heart and the Imperial baldric. Nor could he by any reasoning, but only by a point of view suddenly wafted, by his temptation, beyond his control, succeed in reconciling in his own person the individual and social elements of well-being as he had in theory only a little while before harmonized the conflicting Guelfs and Ghibellins. Will enough was left this hero of the will for a sacrifice, an altruistic decision. The balanced just and statesmanlike one, born of that equal practical regard for self and others which flows from a conception of the mutual service and essential unity of humanity, was overleaped, and so

"The one step too mean
For him to take, — we suffer at this day
Because of: Ecelin had pushed away
Its chance ere Dante could arrive and take
That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake."

That especial juncture of affairs, during the reign of Frederick II., favorable to the unification and expansion of the life of Italy, lacked only the perception and force of a Sordello and the practised ability of a Salinguerra as his instrument. As Mr. Bryce says, in his "Holy Roman Empire," the Emperors "might have become, had they seen their opportunity and been strong enough to improve it, the exponents and guides of the political movement, the pioneers, in part at least, of the Reformation" (chapter xv.). Already by Dante's time the dream of world welfare to be won for Europe by the Empire had lost its grip upon contemporaneous conditions and practical policy, and Madame de Staël's wise historical epigram in "Corinne," was as appropriate for Dante as for Arnold of Brescia and his compeers, of whom she said that they took memories for hopes, — "Qui ont pris les souvenirs pour les espérances."

CHARLOTTE PORTER.
HELEN A. CLARKE.

STRAFFORD

A TRAGEDY

1837

DEDICATED, IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY

LONDON: *April 23, 1837*

PERSONS

CHARLES I.
Earl of HOLLAND.
Lord SAVILE.
Sir HENRY VANE.
WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORTH, Earl of STRAFFORD.
JOHN PYM.
JOHN HAMPDEN.
The younger VANE.
DENZIL HOLLIS.
BENJAMIN RUDYARD.
NATHANIEL FIENNES.
Earl of LOUDON.
MAXWELL, *Usher of the Black Rod.*
BALFOUR, *Constable of the Tower.*
A Puritan.
Queen HENRIETTA.
LUCY PERCY, Countess of Carlisle.

Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents of STRAFFORD, *Secretaries, Officers of the Court, &c. Two of* STRAFFORD'S *children.*

ACT I

SCENE I.—*A House near Whitehall.* HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, *the younger* VANE, RUDYARD, FIENNES *and many of the Presbyterian Party:* LOUDON *and other Scots Commissioners.*

Vane. I say, if he be here —
Rudyard. (And he is here!) —
Hollis. For England's sake let every man be still
Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,
Till Pym rejoin us! Rudyard! Henry Vane!
One rash conclusion may decide our course
And with it England's fate — think — England's fate!
Hampden, for England's sake they should be still!
Vane. You say so, Hollis? Well, I must be still.
It is indeed too bitter that one man,
Any one man's mere presence, should suspend
England's combined endeavor: little need
To name him!
Rudyard. For you are his brother, Hollis!
Hampden. Shame on you, Rudyard! time to tell him that,
When he forgets the Mother of us all.
Rudyard. Do I forget her?
Hampden. You talk idle hate
Against her foe: is that so strange a thing?
Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs?
A Puritan. The Philistine strode, cursing as he went:
But David — five smooth pebbles from the brook
Within his scrip . . .
Rudyard. Be you as still as David!

Fiennes. Here 's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue
Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments;
Why, when the last sat, Wentworth sat with us!
Rudyard. Let 's hope for news of them now he returns —
He that was safe in Ireland, as we thought!
— But I 'll abide Pym's coming.
Vane. Now, by Heaven,
They may be cool who can, silent who will —
Some have a gift that way! Wentworth is here,
Here, and the King 's safe closeted with him
Ere this. And when I think on all that 's past
Since that man left us, how his single arm
Rolled the advancing good of England back
And set the woful past up in its place,
Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be, —
How that man has made firm the fickle King
(Hampden, I will speak out!) — in aught he feared
To venture on before; taught tyranny
Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,
To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close
That strangled agony bleeds mute to death;
How he turns Ireland to a private stage
For training infant villanies, new ways
Of wringing treasure out of tears and blood,
Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark
To try how much man's nature can endure
— If he dies under it, what harm? if not,
Why, one more trick is added to the rest
Worth a king's knowing, and what Ireland bears
England may learn to bear: — how all this while
That man has set himself to one dear task,
The bringing Charles to relish more and more
Power, power without law, power and blood too

— Can I be still?
Hampden. For that you should be still.
Vane. Oh Hampden, then and now! The year
he left us,
The People in full Parliament could wrest
The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King;
And now, he 'll find in an obscure small room
A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men
That take up England's cause: England is here!
Hampden. And who despairs of England?
Rudyard. That do I,
If Wentworth comes to rule her. I am sick
To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,
The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,
May yet be longed-for back again. I say,
I do despair.
Vane. And, Rudyard, I 'll say this —
Which all true men say after me, not loud
But solemnly and as you 'd say a prayer!
This King, who treads our England underfoot,
Has just so much . . . it may be fear or craft,
As bids him pause at each fresh outrage; friends,
He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,
Some voice to ask, "Why shrink? Am I not by?"
Now, one whom England loved for serving her,
Found in his heart to say, "I know where best
The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans
Upon me when you trample." Witness, you!
So Wentworth heartened Charles, so England fell.
But inasmuch as life is hard to take
From England . . .
Many Voices. Go on, Vane! 'T is well said, Vane!
Vane. — Who has not forgotten Runnymead! —
Voices. 'T is well and bravely spoken, Vane!
Go on!

Vane. — There are some little signs of late she knows
The ground no place for her. She glances round,
Wentworth has dropped the hand, is gone his way
On other service: what if she arise?
No! the King beckons, and beside him stands
The same bad man once more, with the same smile
And the same gesture. Now shall England crouch,
Or catch at us and rise?
Voices. The Renegade!
Haman! Ahithophel!
Hampden. Gentlemen of the North,
It was not thus the night your claims were urged,
And we pronounced the League and Covenant,
The cause of Scotland, England's cause as well:
Vane there, sat motionless the whole night through.
Vane. Hampden!
Fiennes. Stay, Vane!
Loudon. Be just and patient, Vane!
Vane. Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon! you
Have still a Parliament, and this your League
To back it; you are free in Scotland still:
While we are brothers, hope 's for England yet.
But know you wherefore Wentworth comes? to quench
This last of hopes? that he brings war with him?
Know you the man's self? what he dares?
Loudon. We know,
All know — 't is nothing new.
Vane. And what 's new, then,
In calling for his life? Why, Pym himself —
You must have heard — ere Wentworth dropped our cause
He would see Pym first; there were many more

Strong on the people's side and friends of his,
Eliot that 's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,
But for these Wentworth cared not; only, Pym
He would see — Pym and he were sworn, 't is said,
To live and die together; so, they met
At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are sure, was long,
Specious enough, the devil's argument
Lost nothing on his lips; he 'd have Pym own
A patriot could not play a purer part
Than follow in his track; they two combined
Might put down England. Well, Pym heard him out;
One glance — you know Pym's eye — one word was all:
"You leave us, Wentworth! while your head is on,
I' ll not leave you."
Hampden. Has he left Wentworth, then?
Has England lost him? Will you let him speak,
Or put your crude surmises in his mouth?
Away with this! Will you have Pym or Vane?
Voices. Wait Pym's arrival! Pym shall speak.
Hampden. Meanwhile
Let Loudon read the Parliament's report
From Edinburgh: our last hope, as Vane says,
Is in the stand it makes. Loudon!
Vane. No, no!
Silent I can be: not indifferent!
Hampden. Then each keep silence, praying God to spare
His anger, cast not England quite away
In this her visitation!
A Puritan. Seven years long
The Midianite drove Israel into dens
And caves. Till God sent forth a mighty man,

PYM *enters.*

Even Gideon!
Pym. Wentworth 's come: nor sickness, care,
The ravaged body nor the ruined soul,
More than the winds and waves that beat his ship,
Could keep him from the King. He has not reached
Whitehall: they 've hurried up a Council there
To lose no time and find him work enough.
Where 's Loudon? your Scots' Parliament . . .
Loudon. Holds firm:
We were about to read reports.
Pym. The King
Has just dissolved your Parliament.
Loudon and other Scots. Great God!
An oath-breaker! Stand by us, England, then!
Pym. The King 's too sanguine; doubtless Wentworth 's here;
But still some little form might be kept up.
Hampden. Now speak, Vane! Rudyard, you had much to say!
Hollis. The rumor 's false, then . . .
Pym. Ay, the Court gives out
His own concerns have brought him back: I know
'T is the King calls him. Wentworth supersedes
The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons
Whose part is played; there 's talk enough, by this,
Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is now
To turn the record's last and bloody leaf
Which, chronicling a nation's great despair,
Tells they were long rebellious, and their lord
Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,
He drew the sword on them and reigned in peace.
Laud's laying his religion on the Scots
Was the last gentle entry: the new page

Shall run, the King thinks, "Wentworth thrust it down
At the sword's point."
A Puritan. I 'll do your bidding, Pym,
England's and God's — one blow!
Pym. A goodly thing —
We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing
To right that England. Heaven grows dark above:
Let 's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall,
To say how well the English spirit comes out
Beneath it! All have done their best, indeed,
From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
To the least here: and who, the least one here,
When she is saved (for her redemption dawns
Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns — it dawns)
Who 'd give at any price his hope away
Of being named along with the Great Men?
We would not — no, we would not give that up!
Hampden. And one name shall be dearer than all names.
When children, yet unborn, are taught that name
After their fathers', — taught what matchless man . . .
Pym. . . . Saved England? What if Wentworth's should be still
That name?
Rudyard and others. We have just said it, Pym! His death
Saves her! We said it — there 's no way beside!
I 'll do God's bidding, Pym! They struck down Joab
And purged the land.
Vane. No villanous striking-down!
Rudyard. No, a calm vengeance: let the whole land rise
And shout for it. No Feltons!

Pym. Rudyard, no!
England rejects all Feltons; most of all
Since Wentworth . . . Hampden, say the trust again
Of England in her servants — but I 'll think
You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,
Spite of the past, Wentworth rejoins you, friends!
Vane and others. Wentworth? Apostate! Judas!
Double-dyed
A traitor! Is it Pym, indeed . . .
Pym. . . . Who says
Vane never knew that Wentworth, loved that man,
Was used to stroll with him, arm locked in arm,
Along the streets to see the people pass,
And read in every island-countenance
Fresh argument for God against the King, —
Never sat down, say, in the very house
Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble thoughts,
(You 've joined us, Hampden — Hollis, you as well,
And then left talking over Gracchus' death . . .
Vane. To frame, we know it well, the choicest clause
In the Petition of Right: he framed such clause
One month before he took at the King's hand
His Northern Presidency, which that Bill
Denounced.
Pym. Too true! Never more, never more
Walked we together! Most alone I went.
I have had friends — all here are fast my friends —
But I shall never quite forget that friend.
And yet it could not but be real in him!
You, Vane, — you, Rudyard, have no right to trust
To Wentworth: but can no one hope with me?
Hampden, will Wentworth dare shed English blood
Like water?
Hampden. Ireland is Aceldama.

Pym. Will he turn Scotland to a hunting-ground
To please the King, now that he knows the King?
The People or the King? and that King, Charles!
Hampden. Pym, all here know you: you 'll not set your heart
On any baseless dream. But say one deed
Of Wentworth's since he left us . . .
[*Shouting without.*
Vane. There! he comes,
And they shout for him! Wentworth 's at Whitehall,
The King embracing him, now, as we speak,
And he, to be his match in courtesies,
Taking the whole war's risk upon himself,
Now, while you tell us here how changed he is!
Hear you?
Pym. And yet if 't is a dream, no more,
That Wentworth chose their side, and brought the King
To love it as though Laud had loved it first,
And the Queen after; — that he led their cause
Calm to success, and kept it spotless through,
So that our very eyes could look upon
The travail of our souls, and close content
That violence, which something mars even right
Which sanctions it, had taken off no grace
From its serene regard. Only a dream!
Hampden. We meet here to accomplish certain good
By obvious means, and keep tradition up
Of free assemblages, else obsolete,
In this poor chamber: nor without effect
Has friend met friend to counsel and confirm,
As, listening to the beats of England's heart,
We spoke its wants to Scotland's prompt reply
By these her delegates. Remains alone

That word grow deed, as with God's help it shall —
But with the devil's hindrance, who doubts too?
Looked we or no that tyranny should turn
Her engines of oppression to their use?
Whereof, suppose the worst be Wentworth here —
Shall we break off the tactics which succeed
In drawing out our formidablest foe,
Let bickering and disunion take their place?
Or count his presence as our conquest's proof,
And keep the old arms at their steady play?
Proceed to England's work! Fiennes, read the list!
Fiennes. Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid
In every county, save the northern parts
Where Wentworth's influence . . . [*Shouting.*
Vane. I, in England's name,
Declare her work, this way, at end! Till now,
Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best.
We English had free leave to think; till now,
We had a shadow of a Parliament
In Scotland. But all 's changed: they change the first,
They try brute-force for law, they, first of all . . .
Voices. Good! Talk enough! The old true hearts with Vane!
Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her, there 's no act
Serves England!
Voices. Vane for England!
Pym. Pym should be
Something to England. I seek Wentworth, friends.

SCENE II — *Whitehall*

Lady CARLISLE *and* WENTWORTH

Wentworth. And the King?
Lady Carlisle. Wentworth, lean on me! Sit then!

I 'll tell you all; this horrible fatigue
Will kill you.
Wentworth. No; — or, Lucy, just your arm;
I 'll not sit till I 've cleared this up with him:
After that, rest. The King?
Lady Carlisle. Confides in you.
Wentworth. Why? or, why now? — They have kind throats, the knaves!
Shout for me — they!
Lady Carlisle. You come so strangely soon:
Yet we took measures to keep off the crowd —
Did they shout for you?
Wentworth. Wherefore should they not?
Does the King take such measures for himself?
Beside, there 's such a dearth of malcontents,
You say!
Lady Carlisle. I said but few dared carp at you.
Wentworth. At me? at us, I hope! The King and I!
He 's surely not disposed to let me bear
The fame away from him of these late deeds
In Ireland? I am yet his instrument
Be it for well or ill? He trusts me, too!
Lady Carlisle. The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I said,
To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .
Wentworth. All the Court! Evermore the Court about us!
Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane
About us, — then the King will grant me — what?
That he for once put these aside and say —
"Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!"
Lady Carlisle. You professed
You would be calm.
Wentworth. Lucy, and I am calm!

How else shall I do all I come to do,
Broken, as you may see, body and mind,
How shall I serve the King? Time wastes meanwhile,
You have not told me half. His footstep! No.
Quick, then, before I meet him, — I am calm —
Why does the King distrust me?
Lady Carlisle. He does not
Distrust you.
Wentworth. Lucy, you can help me; you
Have even seemed to care for me: one word!
Is it the Queen?
Lady Carlisle. No, not the Queen: the party
That poisons the Queen's ear, Savile and Holland.
Wentworth. I know, I know: old Vane, too, he 's one too?
Go on — and he 's made Secretary. Well?
Or leave them out and go straight to the charge —
The charge!
Lady Carlisle. Oh, there 's no charge, no precise charge,
Only they sneer, make light of — one may say,
Nibble at what you do.
Wentworth. I know! but, Lucy,
I reckoned on you from the first! — Go on!
— Was sure could I once see this gentle friend
When I arrived, she 'd throw an hour away
To help her . . . what am I?
Lady Carlisle. You thought of me,
Dear Wentworth?
Wentworth. But go on! The party here!
Lady Carlisle. They do not think your Irish government
Of that surpassing value . . .
Wentworth The one thing
Of value! The one service that the crown

May count on! All that keeps these very Vanes
In power, to vex me — not that they do vex,
Only it might vex some to hear that service
Decried, the sole support that 's left the King!
Lady Carlisle. So the Archbishop says.
Wentworth. Ah? well, perhaps
The only hand held up in my defence
May be old Laud's! These Hollands then, these Saviles
Nibble? They nibble? — that 's the very word!
Lady Carlisle. Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says,
Exceeds the due proportion: while the tax . . .
Wentworth. Enough! 't is too unworthy, — I am not
So patient as I thought. What 's Pym about?
Lady Carlisle. Pym?
Wentworth. Pym and the People.
Lady Carlisle. Oh, the Faction!
Extinct — of no account: there 'll never be
Another Parliament.
Wentworth. Tell Savile that!
You may know — (ay, you do — the creatures here
Never forget!) that in my earliest life
I was not . . . much that I am now! The King
May take my word on points concerning Pym
Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,
I bid them ruin their wise selves, not me,
These Vanes and Hollands! I 'll not be their tool
Who might be Pym's friend yet.
But there 's the King!
Where is he?
Lady Carlisle. Just apprised that you arrive.
Wentworth. And why not here to meet me? I was told

He sent for me, nay, longed for me.
Lady Carlisle. Because, —
He is now . . . I think a Council 's sitting now
About this Scots affair.
Wentworth A Council sits?
They have not taken a decided course
Without me in the matter?
Lady Carlisle. I should say . . .
Wentworth. The war? They cannot have agreed to that?
Not the Scots' war? — without consulting me —
Me, that am here to show how rash it is,
How easy to dispense with? — Ah, you too
Against me! well, — the King may take his time.
— Forget it, Lucy! Cares make peevish: mine
Weigh me (but 't is a secret) to my grave.
Lady Carlisle. For life or death I am your own, dear friend! [*Goes out.*
Wentworth. Heartless! but all are heartless here. Go now,
Forsake the People!
I did not forsake
The People: they shall know it, when the King
Will trust me! — who trusts all beside at once,
While I have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,
And am not trusted: have but saved the throne:
Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,
And am not trusted. But he 'll see me now.
Weston is dead: the Queen 's half English now —
More English: one decisive word will brush
These insects from . . . the step I know so well!
The King! But now, to tell him . . . no — to ask
What 's in me he distrusts: — or, best begin
By proving that this frightful Scots affair
Is just what I foretold. So much to say,

And the flesh fails, now, and the time is come,
And one false step no way to be repaired.
You were avenged, Pym, could you look on me.

PYM *enters.*

Wentworth. I little thought of you just then.
Pym. No? I
Think always of you, Wentworth.
Wentworth. The old voice!
I wait the King, sir.
Pym. True — you look so pale!
A Council sits within; when that breaks up
He 'll see you.
Wentworth. Sir, I thank you.
Pym. Oh, thank Laud!
You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs
The case is desperate: he 'll not be long
To-day: he only means to prove, to-day,
We English all are mad to have a hand
In butchering the Scots for serving God
After their fathers' fashion: only that!
Wentworth. Sir, keep your jests for those who relish them!
(Does he enjoy their confidence?) 'T is kind
To tell me what the Council does.
Pym. You grudge
That I should know it had resolved on war
Before you came? no need; you shall have all
The credit, trust me!
Wentworth. Have the Council dared —
They have not dared . . . that is — I know you not.
Farewell, sir: times are changed.
Pym. — Since we two met
At Greenwich? Yes: poor patriots though we be,

You cut a figure, makes some slight return
For your exploits in Ireland! Changed indeed,
Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!
Ah, Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance' sake,
Just to decide a question; have you, now,
Felt your old self since you forsook us?
Wentworth. Sir!
Pym. Spare me the gesture! you misapprehend.
Think not I mean the advantage is with me.
I was about to say that, for my part,
I never quite held up my head since then —
Was quite myself since then: for first, you see,
I lost all credit after that event
With those who recollect how sure I was
Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side.
Forgive me: Savile, old Vane, Holland here,
Eschew plain-speaking: 't is a trick I keep.
Wentworth. How, when, where, Savile, Vane, and Holland speak,
Plainly or otherwise, would have my scorn,
All of my scorn, sir . . .
Pym. . . . Did not my poor thoughts
Claim somewhat?
Wentworth Keep your thoughts! believe the King
Mistrusts me for their prattle, all these Vanes
And Saviles! make your mind up, o' God's love,
That I am discontented with the King!
Pym. Why, you may be: I should be, that I know,
Were I like you.
Wentworth. Like me?
Pym. I care not much
For titles: our friend Eliot died no lord,
Hampden 's no lord, and Savile is a lord;
But you care, since you sold your soul for one.

I can't think, therefore, your soul's purchaser
Did well to laugh you to such utter scorn
When you twice prayed so humbly for its price,
The thirty silver pieces . . . I should say,
The Earldom you expected, still expect,
And may. Your letters were the movingest!
Console yourself: I 've borne him prayers just now
From Scotland not to be oppressed by Laud,
Words moving in their way: he 'll pay, be sure,
As much attention as to those you sent.
Wentworth. False, sir! Who showed them you?
Suppose it so,
The King did very well . . . nay, I was glad
When it was shown me: I refused, the first!
John Pym, you were my friend — forbear me once!
Pym. Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,
That all should come to this!
Wentworth. Leave me!
Pym. My friend,
Why should I leave you?
Wentworth. To tell Rudyard this,
And Hampden this!
Pym. Whose faces once were bright
At my approach, now sad with doubt and fear,
Because I hope in you — yes, Wentworth, you
Who never mean to ruin England — you
Who shake off, with God's help, an obscene dream
In this Ezekiel chamber, where it crept
Upon you first, and wake, yourself, your true
And proper self, our Leader, England's Chief,
And Hampden's friend!
This is the proudest day,
Come, Wentworth! Do not even see the King!
The rough old room will seem itself again!
We 'll both go in together: you 've not seen

Hampden so long: come: and there's Fiennes: you 'll have
To know young Vane. This is the proudest day!
[*The* KING *enters.* WENTWORTH *lets fall* PYM'S *hand.*
Charles. Arrived, my lord? — This gentleman, we know
Was your old friend.
The Scots shall be informed
What we determine for their happiness.
[PYM *goes out.*
You have made haste, my lord.
Wentworth. Sir, I am come . . .
Charles. To see an old familiar — nay, 't is well;
Aid us with his experience: this Scots' League
And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs
That they intrigue with France: the Faction too,
Whereof your friend there is the head and front,
Abets them, — as he boasted, very like.
Wentworth. Sir, trust me! but for this once, trust me, sir!
Charles. What can you mean?
Wentworth. That you should trust me, sir!
Oh — not for my sake! but 't is sad, so sad
That for distrusting me, you suffer — you
Whom I would die to serve: sir, do you think
That I would die to serve you?
Charles. But rise, Wentworth!
Wentworth. What shall convince you? What does Savile do
To prove him . . . Ah, one can't tear out one's heart
And show it, how sincere a thing it is!
Charles. Have I not trusted you?
Wentworth. Say aught but that!
There is my comfort, mark you: all will be

So different when you trust me — as you shall!
It has not been your fault, — I was away,
Mistook, maligned, how was the King to know?
I am here, now — he means to trust me, now —
All will go on so well!
Charles. Be sure I do —
I 've heard that I should trust you: as you came,
Your friend, the Countess, told me . . .
Wentworth. No, — hear nothing —
Be told nothing about me! — you 're not told
Your right-hand serves you, or your children love you!
Charles. You love me, Wentworth: rise!
Wentworth. I can speak now.
I have no right to hide the truth. 'T is I
Can save you: only I. Sir, what must be?
Charles. Since Laud's assured (the minutes are within)
— Loathe as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .
Wentworth. That is, he 'll have a war: what 's done is done!
Charles. They have intrigued with France; that 's clear to Laud.
Wentworth. Has Laud suggested any way to meet
The war's expense?
Charles. He 'd not decide so far
Until you joined us.
Wentworth. Most considerate!
He 's certain they intrigue with France, these Scots?
The People would be with us.
Charles. Pym should know.
Wentworth. The People for us — were the People for us!
Sir, a great thought comes to reward your trust:
Summon a Parliament! in Ireland first,

Then, here.
Charles. In truth?
Wentworth. That saves us! that puts off
The war, gives time to right their grievances —
To talk with Pym. I know the Faction, — Laud
So styles it, — tutors Scotland: all their plans
Suppose no Parliament: in calling one
You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs
Of Scotland's treason; then bid England help:
Even Pym will not refuse.
Charles. You would begin
With Ireland?
Wentworth. Take no care for that: that 's sure
To prosper.
Charles. You shall rule me. You were best
Return at once: but take this ere you go!
Now, do I trust you? You 're an Earl: my Friend
Of Friends: yes, while . . . You hear me not!
Wentworth. Say it all o'er again — but once again:
The first was for the music: once again!
Charles. Strafford, my friend, there may have been reports,
Vain rumors. Henceforth touching Strafford is
To touch the apple of my sight: why gaze
So earnestly?
Wentworth. I am grown young again,
And foolish. What was it we spoke of?
Charles. Ireland,
The Parliament, —
Wentworth. I may go when I will?
— Now?
Charles. Are you tired so soon of us?
Wentworth. My King!
But you will not so utterly abhor
A Parliament? I 'd serve you any way.

Charles. You said just now this was the only way.
Wentworth. Sir, I will serve you.
Charles. Strafford, spare yourself:
You are so sick, they tell me.
Wentworth. 'T is my soul
That 's well and prospers now.
This Parliament —
We 'll summon it, the English one — I 'll care
For everything. You shall not need them much.
Charles. If they prove restive . . .
Wentworth. I shall be with you.
Charles. Ere they assemble?
Wentworth. I will come, or else
Deposit this infirm humanity
I' the dust. My whole heart stays with you, my King! [*As* WENTWORTH *goes out, the* QUEEN *enters.*
Charles. That man must love me.
Queen. Is it over then?
Why, he looks yellower than ever! Well,
At least we shall not hear eternally
Of service — services: he 's paid at least.
Charles. Not done with: he engages to surpass
All yet performed in Ireland.
Queen. I had thought
Nothing beyond was ever to be done.
The war, Charles — will he raise supplies enough?
Charles. We 've hit on an expedient; he . . . that is,
I have advised . . . we have decided on
The calling — in Ireland — of a Parliament.
Queen. O truly! You agree to that? Is that
The first fruit of his counsel? But I guessed
As much.

Charles. This is too idle, Henriette!
I should know best. He will strain every nerve,
And once a precedent established . . .
Queen. Notice
How sure he is of a long term of favor!
He 'll see the next, and the next after that;
No end to Parliaments!
Charles. Well, it is done.
He talks it smoothly, doubtless. If, indeed,
The Commons here . . .
Queen. Here! you will summon them
Here? Would I were in France again to see
A King!
Charles. But, Henriette . . .
Queen. Oh, the Scots see clear!
Why should they bear your rule?
Charles. But listen, sweet!
Queen. Let Wentworth listen — you confide in him!
Charles. I do not, love, — I do not so confide!
The Parliament shall never trouble us
. . . Nay, hear me! I have schemes, such schemes: we' ll buy
The leaders off: without that, Wentworth's counsel
Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it
To have excuse for breaking it forever,
And whose will then the blame be? See you not?
Come, dearest! — look, the little fairy, now,
That cannot reach my shoulder! Dearest, come!

ACT II

Scene I — (As in Act I. Scene I.)

The same Party enters.

Rudyard. Twelve subsidies!
Vane. Oh, Rudyard, do not laugh
At least!
Rudyard. True: Strafford called the Parliament—
'T is he should laugh!
A Puritan. Out of the serpent's root
Comes forth a cockatrice.
Fiennes. — A stinging one,
If that 's the Parliament: twelve subsidies!
A stinging one! but, brother, where 's your word
For Strafford's other nest-egg, the Scots' war?
The Puritan. His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.
Fiennes. Shall be? It chips the shell, man; peeps abroad.
Twelve subsidies! — Why, how now, Vane?
Rudyard. Peace, Fiennes!
Fiennes. Ah? — But he was not more a dupe than I,
Or you, or any here, the day that Pym
Returned with the good news. Look up, friend Vane!
We all believed that Strafford meant us well
In summoning the Parliament.

Hampden *enters.*

Vane. Now, Hampden,
Clear me! I would have leave to sleep again:
I 'd look the People in the face again:

Clear me from having, from the first, hoped, dreamed
Better of Strafford!
Hampden. You may grow one day
A steadfast light to England, Henry Vane!
Rudyard. Meantime, by flashes I make shift to see
Strafford revived our Parliaments; before,
War was but talked of; there 's an army, now:
Still, we 've a Parliament! Poor Ireland bears
Another wrench (she dies the hardest death!) —
Why, speak of it in Parliament! and lo,
'T is spoken, so console yourselves!
Fiennes. The jest!
We clamoured, I suppose, thus long, to win
The privilege of laying on our backs
A sorer burden than the King dares lay!
Rudyard. Mark now: we meet at length, complaints pour in
From every county, all the land cries out
On loans and levies, curses ship-money,
Calls vengeance on the Star Chamber; we lend
An ear. "Ay, lend them all the ears you have!"
Puts in the King; "my subjects, as you find,
Are fretful, and conceive great things of you.
Just listen to them, friends; you 'll sanction me
The measures they most wince at, make them yours,
Instead of mine, I know: and, to begin,
They say my levies pinch them, — raise me straight
Twelve subsidies!"
Fiennes. All England cannot furnish
Twelve subsidies!
Hollis. But Strafford, just returned
From Ireland — what has he to do with that?
How could he speak his mind? He left before
The Parliament assembled. Pym, who knows

Strafford . . .
Rudyard. Would I were sure we know ourselves!
What is for good, what, bad — who friend, who foe!
Hollis. Do you count Parliaments no gain?
Rudyard. A gain?
While the King's creatures overbalance us?
— There 's going on, beside, among ourselves
A quiet, slow, but most effectual course
Of buying over, sapping, leavening
The lump till all is leaven. Glanville 's gone.
I 'll put a case; had not the Court declared
That no sum short of just twelve subsidies
Will be accepted by the King — our House,
I say, would have consented to that offer
To let us buy off ship-money!
Hollis. Most like,
If, say, six subsidies will buy it off,
The House . . .
Rudyard. Will grant them! Hampden, do you hear?
Congratulate with me! the King 's the king,
And gains his point at last — our own assent
To that detested tax? All 's over, then!
There 's no more taking refuge in this room,
Protesting, "Let the King do what he will,
We, England, are no party to our shame:
Our day will come!" Congratulate with me!

PYM *enters.*

Vane. Pym, Strafford called this Parliament, you say,
But we 'll not have our Parliaments like those
In Ireland, Pym!
Rudyard. Let him stand forth, your friend!

One doubtful act hides far too many sins;
It can be stretched no more, and, to my mind,
Begins to drop from those it covered.
Other Voices. Good!
Let him avow himself! No fitter time!
We wait thus long for you.
Rudyard. Perhaps, too long!
Since nothing but the madness of the Court,
In thus unmasking its designs at once,
Has saved us from betraying England. Stay —
This Parliament is Strafford's: let us vote
Our list of grievances too black by far
To suffer talk of subsidies: or best,
That ship-money 's disposed of long ago
By England: any vote that 's broad enough:
And then let Strafford, for the love of it,
Support his Parliament!
Vane. And vote as well
No war to be with Scotland! Hear you, Pym?
We 'll vote, no war! No part nor lot in it
For England!
Many Voices. Vote, no war! Stop the new levies!
No Bishops' war! At once! When next we meet!
Pym. Much more when next we meet! Friends, which of you
Since first the course of Strafford was in doubt,
Has fallen the most away in soul from me?
Vane. I sat apart, even now under God's eye,
Pondering the words that should denounce you, Pym,
In presence of us all, as one at league
With England's enemy.
Pym. You are a good
And gallant spirit, Henry. Take my hand
And say you pardon me for all the pain

Till now! Strafford is wholly ours.
Many Voices. Sure? sure?
Pym. Most sure: for Charles dissolves the Parliament
While I speak here.
— And I must speak, friends, now!
Strafford is ours. The King detects the change,
Casts Strafford off forever, and resumes
His ancient path: no Parliament for us,
No Strafford for the King!
Come, all of you,
To bid the King farewell, predict success
To his Scots' expedition, and receive
Strafford, our comrade now. The next will be
Indeed a Parliament!
Vane. Forgive me, Pym.
Voices. This looks like truth: Strafford can have indeed,
No choice.
Pym. Friends, follow me! He 's with the King.
Come, Hampden, and come, Rudyard, and come, Vane!
This is no sullen day for England, sirs!
Strafford shall tell you!
Voices. To Whitehall then! Come!

Scene II — *Whitehall*

Charles *and* Strafford

Charles. Strafford!
Strafford. Is it a dream? my papers, here —
Thus, as I left them, all the plans you found
So happy — (look! the track you pressed my hand
For pointing out) — and in this very room,

Over these very plans, you tell me, sir,
With the same face, too — tell me just one thing
That ruins them! How's this! What may this mean?
Sir, who has done this?
Charles. Strafford, who but I?
You bade me put the rest away: indeed
You are alone.
Strafford. Alone, and like to be!
No fear, when some unworthy scheme grows ripe,
Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to loose
The mischief on the world! Laud hatches war,
Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me,
And I 'm alone.
Charles. At least, you knew as much
When first you undertook the war.
Strafford. My liege,
Was this the way? I said, since Laud would lap
A little blood, 't were best to hurry over
The loathsome business, not to be whole months
At slaughter — one blow, only one, then, peace,
Save for the dreams. I said, to please you both
I 'd lead an Irish army to the West,
While in the South an English . . . but you look
As though you had not told me fifty times
'T was a brave plan! My army is all raised,
I am prepared to join it . . .
Charles. Hear me, Strafford!
Strafford. . . . When, for some little thing, my whole design
Is set aside — (where is the wretched paper?)
I am to lead — (ay, here it is) — to lead
The English army: why? Northumberland
That I appointed, chooses to be sick —
Is frightened: and, meanwhile, who answers for

The Irish Parliament? or army, either?
Is this my plan?
Charles. So disrespectful, sir?
Strafford. My liege, do not believe it! I am yours,
Yours ever: 't is too late to think about:
To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this untoward step
Shall pass for mine; the world shall think it mine.
But here! But here! I am so seldom here,
Seldom with you, my King! I, soon to rush
Alone upon a giant in the dark!
Charles. My Strafford!
Strafford [*examines papers awhile*]. "Seize the passes of the Tyne!"
But, sir, you see — see all I say is true?
My plan was sure to prosper, so, no cause
To ask the Parliament for help; whereas
We need them frightfully.
Charles. Need the Parliament?
Strafford. Now, for God's sake, sir, not one error more!
We can afford no error; we draw, now,
Upon our last resource: the Parliament
Must help us!
Charles. I've undone you, Strafford!
Strafford. Nay —
Nay — why despond, sir, 't is not come to that!
I have not hurt you? Sir, what have I said
To hurt you? I unsay it! Don't despond!
Sir, do you turn from me?
Charles. My friend of friends!
Strafford. We 'll make a shift. Leave me the Parliament!
Help they us ne'er so little and I 'll make
Sufficient out of it. We 'll speak them fair.

They 're sitting, that 's one great thing; that half gives
Their sanction to us; that 's much: don't despond!
Why, let them keep their money, at the worst!
The reputation of the People's help
Is all we want: we 'll make shift yet!
Charles. Good Strafford!
Strafford. But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small
They offer, we 'll accept it: any sum —
For the look of it: the least grant tells the Scots
The Parliament is ours — their stanch ally
Turned ours: that told, there 's half the blow to strike!
What will the grant be? What does Glanville think?
Charles. Alas!
Strafford. My liege?
Charles. Strafford!
Strafford. But answer me!
Have they . . . O surely not refused us half?
Half the twelve subsidies? We never looked
For all of them. How many do they give?
Charles. You have not heard . . .
Strafford. (What has he done?) — Heard what?
But speak at once, sir, this grows terrible!
[*The* KING *continuing silent.*
You have dissolved them! — I 'll not leave this man.
Charles. 'T was old Vane's ill-judged vehemence.
Strafford. Old Vane?
Charles. He told them, just about to vote the half,
That nothing short of all twelve subsidies
Would serve our turn, or be accepted.
Strafford. Vane!
Vane! Who, sir, promised me, that very Vane . . .
O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me,

The one last hope — I that despair, my hope —
That I should reach his heart one day, and cure
All bitterness one day, be proud again
And young again, care for the sunshine too,
And never think of Eliot any more, —
God, and to toil for this, go far for this,
Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart
And find Vane there!

[*Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing with a forced calmness.*

Northumberland is sick:
Well, then, I take the army: Wilmot leads
The horse, and he, with Conway, must secure
The passes of the Tyne: Ormond supplies
My place in Ireland. Here, we 'll try the City:
If they refuse a loan — debase the coin
And seize the bullion! we 've no other choice.
Herbert . . .
And this while I am here! with you!
And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane! I go,
And, I once gone, they 'll close around you, sir,
When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure
To ruin me — and you along with me!
Do you see that? And you along with me!
— Sir, you 'll not ever listen to these men,
And I away, fighting your battle? Sir,
If they — if She — charge me, no matter how —
Say you, "At any time when he returns
His head is mine!" Don't stop me there! You know
My head is yours, but never stop me there!

Charles. Too shameful, Strafford! You advised the war,
And . . .

Strafford. I! I! that was never spoken with

Till it was entered on! That loathe the war!
That say it is the maddest, wickedest . . .
Do you know, sir, I think within my heart,
That you would say I did advise the war;
And if, through your own weakness, or what's worse,
These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back,
You will not step between the raging People
And me, to say . . .
I knew it! from the first
I knew it! Never was so cold a heart!
Remember that I said it — that I never
Believed you for a moment!
— And, you loved me?
You thought your perfidy profoundly hid
Because I could not share the whisperings
With Vane, with Savile? What, the face was masked?
I had the heart to see, sir! Face of flesh,
But heart of stone — of smooth cold frightful stone!
Ay, call them! Shall I call for you? The Scots
Goaded to madness? Or the English — Pym —
Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh, you think
I 'll leave them in the dark about it all?
They shall not know you? Hampden, Pym shall not?

PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.*, *enter.*

[*Dropping on his knee.*] Thus favored with your gracious countenance
What shall a rebel League avail against
Your servant, utterly and ever yours?
So, gentlemen, the King's not even left
The privilege of bidding me farewell
Who haste to save the People — that you style

Your People — from the mercies of the Scots
And France their friend?
[*To* CHARLES.] Pym's grave gray eyes are fixed
Upon you, sir!
Your pleasure, gentlemen?
Hampden. The King dissolved us — 't is the King we seek
And not Lord Strafford.
Strafford. — Strafford, guilty too
Of counselling the measure. [*To* CHARLES.] (Hush . . . you know —
You have forgotten — sir, I counselled it)
A heinous matter, truly! But the King
Will yet see cause to thank me for a course
Which now, perchance . . . (Sir, tell them so!) — he blames.
Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge:
I shall be with the Scots, you understand?
Then yelp at me!
Meanwhile, your Majesty
Binds me, by this fresh token of your trust . . .
[*Under the pretence of an earnest farewell,* STRAFFORD *conducts* CHARLES *to the door, in such a manner as to hide his agitation from the rest: as the* KING *disappears, they turn as by one impulse to* PYM, *who has not changed his original posture of surprise.*
Hampden. Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man!
Vane and others. Hence, Pym! Come out of this unworthy place
To our old room again! He 's gone.
[STRAFFORD, *just about to follow the* KING, *looks back.*
Pym. Not gone!

[*To* STRAFFORD.] Keep tryst! the old appointment's made anew:
Forget not we shall meet again!
Strafford. So be it!
And if an army follows me?
Vane. His friends
Will entertain your army!
Pym. I'll not say
You have misreckoned, Strafford: time shows.
Perish
Body and spirit! Fool to feign a doubt,
Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve
Of one whose prowess shall achieve the feat!
What share have I in it? Do I affect
To see no dismal sign above your head
When God suspends his ruinous thunder there?
Strafford is doomed. Touch him no one of you!
[PYM, HAMPDEN, *etc.*, *go out.*
Strafford. Pym, we shall meet again!

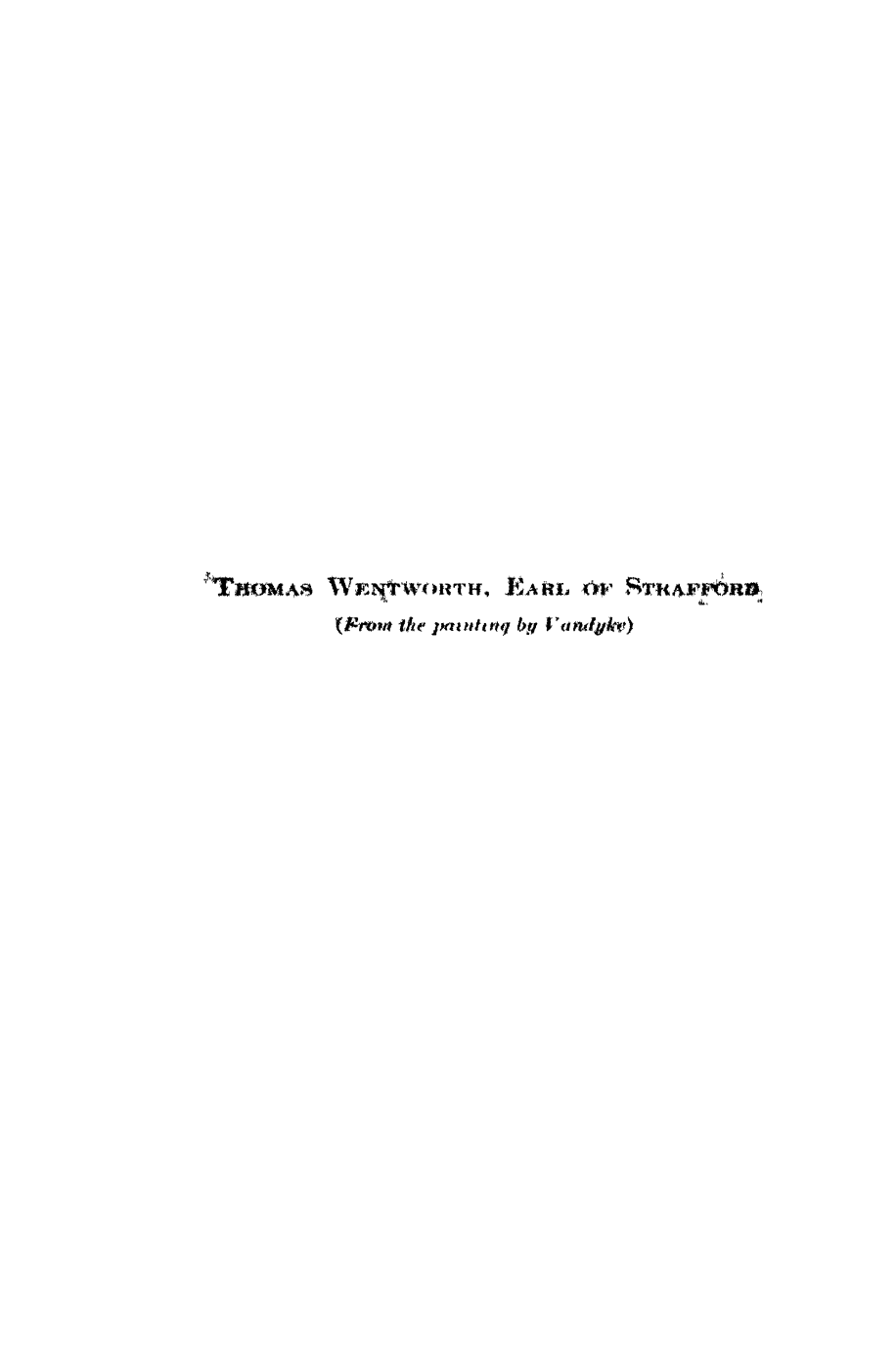
Lady CARLISLE *enters.*

You here, child?
Lady Carlisle. Hush —
I know it all: hush, Strafford!
Strafford. Ah? you know?
Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy!
All knights begin their enterprise, we read,
Under the best of auspices; 't is morn,
The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth
(He's always very young) — the trumpets sound,
Cups pledge him, and, why, the King blesses him —
You need not turn a page of the romance
To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate. Indeed,

We 've the fair Lady here; but she apart, —
A poor man, rarely having handled lance,
And rather old, weary, and far from sure
His Squires are not the Giant's friends. All 's one:
Let us go forth!
Lady Carlisle. Go forth?
Strafford. What matters it?
We shall die gloriously — as the book says.
Lady Carlisle. To Scotland? Not to Scotland?
Strafford. Am I sick
Like your good brother, brave Northumberland?
Beside, these walls seem falling on me.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford,
The wind that saps these walls can undermine
Your camp in Scotland, too. Whence creeps the wind?
Have you no eyes except for Pym? Look here!
A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive
In your contempt. You 'll vanquish Pym? Old Vane
Can vanquish you. And Vane you think to fly?
Rush on the Scots! Do nobly! Vane's slight sneer
Shall test success, adjust the praise, suggest
The faint result: Vane's sneer shall reach you there.
— You do not listen!
Strafford. Oh, — I give that up!
There 's fate in it: I give all here quite up.
Care not what old Vane does or Holland does
Against me! 'T is so idle to withstand!
In no case tell me what they do!
Lady Carlisle. But, Strafford . . .
Strafford. I want a little strife, beside; real strife;
This petty palace-warfare does me harm:
I shall feel better, fairly out of it.
Lady Carlisle. Why do you smile?

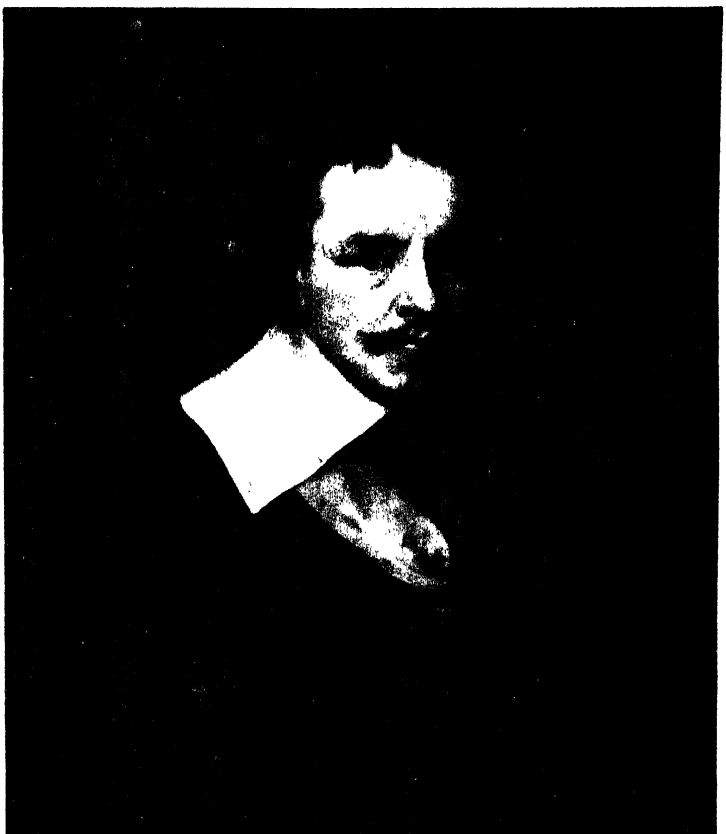
Strafford. I got to fear them, child!
I could have torn his throat at first, old Vane's,
As he leered at me on his stealthy way
To the Queen's closet. Lord, one loses heart!
I often found it on my lips to say
"Do not traduce me to her!"
Lady Carlisle. But the King . . .
Strafford. The King stood there, 't is not so long ago,
— There; and the whisper, Lucy, "Be my friend
Of friends!" — My King! I would have . . .
Lady Carlisle. . . . Died for him?
Strafford. Sworn him true, Lucy: I can die for him.
Lady Carlisle. But go not, Strafford! But you must renounce
This project on the Scots! Die, wherefore die?
Charles never loved you.
Strafford. And he never will.
He 's not of those who care the more for men
That they 're unfortunate.
Lady Carlisle. Then wherefore die
For such a master?
Strafford. You that told me first
How good he was — when I must leave true friends
To find a truer friend! — that drew me here
From Ireland, — I had but to show myself
And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile, and the rest" —
You, child, to ask me this?
Lady Carlisle. (If he have set
His heart abidingly on Charles!)
Then, friend,
I shall not see you any more.
Strafford. Yes, Lucy.
There 's one man here I have to meet.

Lady Carlisle. (The King!
What way to save him from the King?
My soul —
That lent from its own store the charmed disguise
Which clothes the King — he shall behold my soul!)
Strafford, — I shall speak best if you 'll not gaze
Upon me: I had never thought, indeed,
To speak, but you would perish too, so sure!
Could you but know what 't is to bear, my friend,
One image stamped within you, turning blank
The else imperial brilliance of your mind, —
A weakness, but most precious, — like a flaw
I' the diamond, which should shape forth some sweet face
Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there
Lest nature lose her gracious thought forever!
Strafford. When could it be? no! Yet . . . was it the day
We waited in the anteroom, till Holland
Should leave the presence-chamber?
Lady Carlisle. What?
Strafford. — That I
Described to you my love for Charles?
Lady Carlisle. (Ah, no —
One must not lure him from a love like that!
Oh, let him love the King and die! 'T is past.
I shall not serve him worse for that one brief
And passionate hope, silent forever now!)
And you are really bound for Scotland then?
I wish you well: you must be very sure
Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew
Will not be idle — setting Vane aside!
Strafford. If Pym is busy, — you may write of Pym.



THOMAS WENTWORTH, EARL OF STRAFFORD

(From the painting by Vandyke)



Lady Carlisle. What need, since there 's your
King to take your part?
He may endure Vane's counsel; but for Pym —
Think you he 'll suffer Pym to . . .
Strafford. Child, your hair
Is glossier than the Queen's!
Lady Carlisle. Is that to ask
A curl of me?
Strafford. Scotland —— the weary way!
Lady Carlisle. Stay, let me fasten it.
— A rival's, Strafford?
Strafford [*showing the George*]. He hung it there:
twine yours around it, child!
Lady Carlisle. No — no — another time — I
trifle so!
And there 's a masque on foot. Farewell. The Court
Is dull; do something to enliven us
In Scotland: we expect it at your hands.
Strafford. I shall not fail in Scotland.
Lady Carlisle. Prosper — if
You 'll think of me sometimes!
Strafford. How think of him
And not of you? of you, the lingering streak
(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford . . . Well, when the eve
has its last streak
The night has its first star. [*She goes out.*
Strafford. That voice of hers—
You 'd think she had a heart sometimes! His voice
Is soft too.
Only God can save him now.
Be Thou about his bed, about his path!
His path! Where 's England's path? Diverging wide,
And not to join again the track my foot
Must follow — whither? All that forlorn way

Among the tombs! Far — far — till . . . What, they do
Then join again, these paths? For, huge in the dust,
There 's — Pym to face!
Why then, I have a foe
To close with, and a fight to fight at last
Worthy my soul! What, do they beard the King,
And shall the King want Strafford at his need?
Am I not here?
Not in the market-place,
Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud
To catch a glance from Wentworth! They lie down
Hungry yet smile "Why, it must end some day:
Is he not watching for our sake?" Not there!
But in Whitehall, the whited sepulchre,
The . . .
Curse nothing to-night! Only one name
They 'll curse in all those streets to-night. Whose fault?
Did I make kings? set up, the first, a man
To represent the multitude, receive
All love in right of them — supplant them so,
Until you love the man and not the king ——
The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes
Which send me forth.
— To breast the bloody sea
That sweeps before me: with one star for guide.
Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.

ACT III

SCENE I — *Opposite Westminster Hall*

SIR HENRY VANE, LORD SAVILE, LORD HOLLAND, *and others of the Court*

Sir H. Vane. The Commons thrust you out?
Savile. And what kept you
From sharing their civility?
Sir H. Vane. Kept me?
Fresh news from Scotland, sir! worse than the last,
If that may be. All 's up with Strafford there:
Nothing to bar the mad Scots marching hither
Next Lord's-day morning. That detained me, sir!
Well now, before they thrust you out, — go on, —
Their Speaker — did the fellow Lenthal say
All we set down for him?
Holland. Not a word missed.
Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I
And Bristol and some more, with hope to breed
A wholesome awe in the new Parliament.
But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane,
As glared at us!
Vane. So many?
Savile. Not a bench
Without its complement of burly knaves;
Your hopeful son among them: Hampden leant
Upon his shoulder — think of that!
Vane. I 'd think
On Lenthal's speech, if I could get at it.
Urged he, I ask, how grateful they should prove
For this unlooked-for summons from the King?
Holland. Just as we drilled him
Vane. That the Scots will march
On London?

Holland. All, and made so much of it,
A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure
To follow, when . . .
Vane. Well?
Holland. 'T is a strange thing, now?
I 've a vague memory of a sort of sound,
A voice, a kind of vast unnatural voice —
Pym, sir, was speaking! Savile, help me out:
What was it all?
Savile. Something about "a matter" —
No, — "work for England."
Holland. "England's great revenge"
He talked of.
Savile. How should I get used to Pym
More than yourselves?
Holland. However that be,
'T was something with which we had naught to do,
For we were "strangers" and 't was "England's work" —
(All this while looking us straight in the face)
In other words, our presence might be spared.
So, in the twinkling of an eye, before
I settled to my mind what ugly brute
Was likest Pym just then, they yelled us out,
Locked the doors after us, and here are we.
Vane. Eliot's old method . . .
Savile. Prithee, Vane, a truce
To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke,
And how to manage Parliaments! 'T was you
Advised the Queen to summon this: why, Strafford
(To do him justice) would not hear of it.
Vane. Say rather, you have done the best of turns
To Strafford: he 's at York, we all know why.
I would you had not set the Scots on Strafford

Till Strafford put down Pym for us, my lord!
Savile. Was it I altered Strafford's plans? did
I . . .

A Messenger *enters.*

Messenger. The Queen, my lords — she sends
me: follow me
At once; 't is very urgent! she requires
Your counsel: something perilous and strange
Occasions her command.
Savile. We follow, friend!
Now, Vane; — your Parliament will plague us all!
Vane. No Strafford here beside!
Savile. If you dare hint
I had a hand in his betrayal, sir . . .
Holland. Nay, find a fitter time for quarrels —
Pym
Will overmatch the best of you; and, think,
The Queen!
Vane. Come on, then: understand, I loathe
Strafford as much as any — but his use!
To keep off Pym, to screen a friend or two,
I would we had reserved him yet awhile.

Scene II — *Whitehall*

The Queen *and* Lady Carlisle

Queen. It cannot be.
Lady Carlisle. It is so.
Queen. Why, the House
Have hardly met.
Lady Carlisle. They met for that.
Queen. No, no!

Meet to impeach Lord Strafford? 'T is a jest.
Lady Carlisle. A bitter one.
Queen. Consider! 'T is the House
We summoned so reluctantly, which nothing
But the disastrous issue of the war
Persuaded us to summon. They 'll wreak all
Their spite on us, no doubt; but the old way
Is to begin by talk of grievances:
They have their grievances to busy them.
Lady Carlisle. Pym has begun his speech.
Queen. Where 's Vane? — That is,
Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves
His Presidency; he 's at York, we know,
Since the Scots beat him: why should he leave York?
Lady Carlisle. Because the King sent for him.
Queen. Ah — but if
The King did send for him, he let him know
We had been forced to call a Parliament —
A step which Strafford, now I come to think,
Was vehement against.
Lady Carlisle. The policy
Escaped him, of first striking Parliaments
To earth, then setting them upon their feet
And giving them a sword: but this is idle.
Did the King send for Strafford? He will come.
Queen. And what am I to do?
Lady Carlisle. What do? Fail, madam!
Be ruined for his sake! what matters how,
So it but stand on record that you made
An effort, only one?
Queen. The King away
At Theobald's!
Lady Carlisle. Send for him at once: he must
Dissolve the House.

Queen. Wait till Vane finds the truth
Of the report: then . . .
Lady Carlisle. — It will matter little
What the King does. Strafford that lends his arm
And breaks his heart for you!

Sir H. VANE *enters.*

Vane. The Commons, madam,
Are sitting with closed doors. A huge debate,
No lack of noise; but nothing, I should guess,
Concerning Strafford: Pym has certainly
Not spoken yet.
Queen [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. You hear?
Lady Carlisle. I do not hear
That the King's sent for.
Vane. Savile will be able
To tell you more.

HOLLAND *enters.*

Queen. The last news, Holland?
Holland. Pym
Is raging like a fire. The whole House means
To follow him together to Whitehall
And force the King to give up Strafford.
Queen. Strafford?
Holland. If they content themselves with Strafford! Laud
Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank too.
Pym has not left out one of them — I would
You heard Pym raging!
Queen. Vane, go find the King!
Tell the King, Vane, the People follow Pym
To brave us at Whitehall!

SAVILE *enters.*

Savile. Not to Whitehall —
'T is to the Lords they go: they seek redress
On Strafford from his peers — the legal way,
They call it.
Queen. (Wait, Vane!)
Savile. But the adage gives
Long life to threatened men. Strafford can save
Himself so readily: at York, remember,
In his own county: what has he to fear?
The Commons only mean to frighten him
From leaving York. Surely, he will not come.
Queen. Lucy, he will not come!
Lady Carlisle. Once more, the King
Has sent for Strafford. He will come.
Vane. Oh doubtless!
And bring destruction with him: that 's his way.
What but his coming spoilt all Conway's plan?
The King must take his counsel, choose his friends,
Be wholly ruled by him! What's the result?
The North that was to rise, Ireland to help, —
What came of it? In my poor mind, a fright
Is no prodigious punishment.
Lady Carlisle. A fright?
Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks
To frighten him. [*To the* QUEEN.] You will not save him then?
Savile. When something like a charge is made, the King,
Will best know how to save him: and 't is clear,
While Strafford suffers nothing by the matter,
The King may reap advantage: this in question,
No dinning you with ship-money complaints!

Queen [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. If we dissolve them,
who will pay the army?
Protect us from the insolent Scots?
Lady Carlisle. In truth,
I know not, madam. Strafford's fate concerns
Me little: you desired to learn what course
Would save him: I obey you.
Vane. Notice, too,
There can't be fairer ground for taking full
Revenge — (Strafford's revengeful) — than he'll
have
Against his old friend Pym.
Queen. Why, he shall claim
Vengeance on Pym!
Vane. And Strafford, who is he
To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents
That harass all beside? I, for my part,
Should look for something of discomfiture
Had the King trusted me so thoroughly
And been so paid for it.
Holland. He'll keep at York:
All will blow over: he'll return no worse,
Humbled a little, thankful for a place
Under as good a man. Oh, we'll dispense
With seeing Strafford for a month or two!

STRAFFORD *enters*

Queen. You here!
Strafford. The King sends for me, madam.
Queen. Sir,
The King . . .
Strafford. An urgent matter that imports the
King!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Why, Lucy, what 's in agita-
tion now,

That all this muttering and shrugging, see,
Begins at me? They do not speak!
Lady Carlisle. 'T is welcome!
For we are proud of you — happy and proud
To have you with us, Strafford! You were stanch
At Durham: you did well there! Had you not
Been stayed, you might have . . . we said, even now,
Our hope 's in you!
Vane [*to* Lady Carlisle]. The Queen would speak with you,
Strafford. Will one of you, his servants here, vouchsafe
To signify my presence to the King?
Savile. An urgent matter?
Strafford. None that touches you,
Lord Savile! Say, it were some treacherous
Sly pitiful intriguing with the Scots —
You would go free, at least! (They half divine
My purpose!) Madam, shall I see the King?
The service I would render, much concerns
His welfare.
Queen. But his Majesty, my lord,
May not be here, may . . .
Strafford. Its importance, then,
Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, madam,
And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.
Queen [*who has been conversing with* Vane *and* Holland]. The King will see you, sir!
[*To* Lady Carlisle.] Mark me: Pym's worst
Is done by now: he has impeached the Earl,
Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now.
Let us not seem instructed! We should work
No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves
With shame in the world's eye. [*To* Strafford.]
His Majesty

Has much to say with you.
Strafford. Time fleeting, too!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] No means of getting them
away? And She —
What does she whisper? Does she know my pur-
pose?
What does she think of it? Get them away!
Queen [*to* Lady CARLISLE]. He comes to baffle
Pym — he thinks the danger
Far off: tell him no word of it! a time
For help will come; we 'll not be wanting then.
Keep him in play, Lucy — you, self-possessed
And calm! [*To* STRAFFORD.] To spare your lord-
ship some delay
I will myself acquaint the King. [*To* Lady CAR-
LISLE.] Beware!
[*The* QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND, *and*
SAVILE *go out.*
Strafford. She knows it?
Lady Carlisle. Tell me, Strafford!
Strafford. Afterward!
This moment 's the great moment of all time.
She knows my purpose?
Lady Carlisle. Thoroughly: just now
She bade me hide it from you.
Strafford. Quick, dear child,
The whole o' the scheme?
Lady Carlisle. (Ah, he would learn if they
Connive at Pym's procedure! Could they but
Have once apprised the King! But there 's no time
For falsehood, now.) Strafford, the whole is known.
Strafford. Known and approved?
Lady Carlisle. Hardly discountenanced.
Strafford. And the King — say, the King con-
sents as well?

Lady Carlisle. The King 's not yet informed, but will not dare
To interpose.
Strafford. What need to wait him, then?
He 'll sanction it! I stayed, child, tell him, long!
It vexed me to the soul — this waiting here.
You know him, there 's no counting on the King.
Tell him I waited long!
Lady Carlisle. (What can he mean?
Rejoice at the King's hollowness?)
Strafford. I knew
They would be glad of it, — all over once,
I knew they would be glad: but he 'd contrive,
The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,
An angel's making.
Lady Carlisle. (Is he mad?) Dear Strafford,
You were not wont to look so happy.
Strafford. Sweet,
I tried obedience thoroughly. I took
The King's wild plan: of course, ere I could reach
My army, Conway ruined it. I drew
The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,
And would have fought the Scots: the King at once
Made truce with them. Then, Lucy, then, dear child,
God put it in my mind to love, serve, die
For Charles, but never to obey him more!
While he endured their insolence at Ripon
I fell on them at Durham. But you 'll tell
The King I waited? All the anteroom
Is filled with my adherents.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford — Strafford,
What daring act is this you hint?
Strafford. No, no!

'T is here, not daring if you knew? all here!
[*Drawing papers from his breast.*
Full proof, see, ample proof — does the Queen know
I have such damning proof? Bedford and Essex,
Brooke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile?
The simper that I spoilt?), Saye, Mandeville —
Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym!
Lady Carlisle. Great heaven!
Strafford. From Savile and his lords, to Pym
And his losels, crushed! — Pym shall not ward the blow
Nor Savile creep aside from it! The Crew
And the Cabal — I crush them!
Lady Carlisle. And you go —
Strafford, — and now you go? —
Strafford. — About no work
In the background, I promise you! I go
Straight to the House of Lords to claim these knaves.
Mainwaring!
Lady Carlisle. Stay — stay, Strafford!
Strafford. She 'll return,
The Queen — some little project of her own!
No time to lose: the King takes fright perhaps.
Lady Carlisle. Pym 's strong, remember!
Strafford. Very strong, as fits
The Faction's head — with no offence to Hampden,
Vane, Rudyard and my loving Hollis: one
And all they lodge within the Tower to-night
In just equality. Bryan! Mainwaring!
[*Many of his* Adherents *enter.*
The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)
On the Scots' war; my visit 's opportune.
When all is over, Bryan, you proceed
To Ireland: these despatches, mark me, Bryan,

Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond:
We want the army here — my army, raised
At such a cost, that should have done such good,
And was inactive all the time! no matter,
We 'll find a use for it. Willis . . . or, no — you!
You, friend, make haste to York: bear this, at once . . .
Or, — better stay for form's sake, see yoursel'
The news you carry. You remain with me
To execute the Parliament's command,
Mainwaring! Help to seize these lesser knaves,
Take care there 's no escaping at backdoors:
I 'll not have one escape, mind me — not one!
I seem revengeful, Lucy? Did you know
What these men dare!

Lady Carlisle. It is so much they dare!

Strafford. I proved that long ago; my turn is now.
Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens!
Observe who harbors any of the brood
That scramble off: be sure they smart for it!
Our coffers are but lean.
And you, child, too,
Shall have your task; deliver this to Laud.
Laud will not be the slowest in my praise:
"Thorough" he 'll cry! — Foolish, to be so glad!
This life is gay and glowing, after all:
'T is worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine
Just for the bliss of crushing them. To-day
Is worth the living for.

Lady Carlisle. That reddening brow!
You seem . . .

Strafford. Well — do I not? I would be well —
I could not but be well on such a day!
And, this day ended, 't is of slight import
How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul

In Strafford.

Lady Carlisle. Noble Strafford!

Strafford. No farewell!
I 'll see you anon, to-morrow — the first thing.
— If She should come to stay me!

Lady Carlisle. Go — 't is nothing —
Only my heart that swells: it has been thus
Ere now: go, Strafford!

Strafford. To-night, then, let it be.
I must see Him: you, the next after Him.
I 'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends!
You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour
To talk of all your lives. Close after me!
"My friend of friends!"

[STRAFFORD *and the rest go out.*

Lady Carlisle. The King — ever the King!
No thought of one beside, whose little word
Unveils the King to him — one word from me,
Which yet I do not breathe!
Ah, have I spared
Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward
Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way
He is the better for my love. No, no —
He would not look so joyous — I 'll believe
His very eye would never sparkle thus,
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.

SCENE III — *The Antechamber of the House of Lords*

Many of the Presbyterian Party. The Adherents *of* STRAFFORD, *etc.*

A Group of Presbyterians. — 1. I tell you he struck Maxwell: Maxwell sought
To stay the Earl: he struck him and passed on.

2. Fear as you may, keep a good countenance
Before these rufflers.
3. Strafford here the first,
With the great army at his back!
4. No doubt.
I would Pym had made haste: that 's Bryan, hush —
The gallant pointing.
Strafford's Followers. — 1. Mark these worthies, now!
2. A goodly gathering! "Where the carcass is
There shall the eagles" — what 's the rest?
3. For eagles
Say crows.
A Presbyterian. Stand back, sirs!
One of Strafford's Followers. Are we in Geneva?
A Presbyterian. No, nor in Ireland; we have leave to breathe.
One of Strafford's Followers. Truly? Behold how privileged we be
That serve "King Pym"! There 's Some-one at Whitehall
Who skulks obscure; but Pym struts . . .
The Presbyterian. Nearer.
A Follower of Strafford. Higher,
We look to see him. [*To his* Companions.] I 'm to have St. John
In charge; was he among the knaves just now
That followed Pym within there?
Another. The gaunt man
Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect
Pym at his heels so fast? I like it not.

MAXWELL *enters.*

Another. Why, man, they rush into the net!
Here 's Maxwell —
Ha, Maxwell? How the brethren flock around
The fellow! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet
Upon your shoulder, Maxwell?
Maxwell. Gentlemen,
Stand back! a great thing passes here.
A Follower of Stafford [*To another.*] The Earl
Is at his work! [*To* M.] Say, Maxwell, what great thing!
Speak out! [*To a* Presbyterian.] Friend, I 've a kindness for you! Friend,
I 've seen you with St. John: O stockishness!
Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind
St. John's head in a charger? How, the plague,
Not laugh?
Another. Say, Maxwell, what great thing!
Another. Nay, wait:
The jest will be to wait.
First. And who 's to bear
These demure hypocrites? You 'd swear they came . . .
Came . . . just as we come!
[*A* Puritan *enters hastily and without observing* STRAFFORD'S Followers.
The Puritan. How goes on the work?
Has Pym . . .
A Follower of Strafford. The secret 's out at last. Aha,
The carrion 's scented! Welcome, crow the first!
Gorge merrily, you with the blinking eye!
"King Pym has fallen!"

The Puritan. Pym?
A Strafford. Pym!
A Presbyterian. Only Pym?
Many of Strafford's Followers. No, brother, not Pym only; Vane as well,
Rudyard as well, Hampden, St. John as well!
A Presbyterian. My mind misgives: can it be true?
Another. Lost! Lost!
A Strafford. Say we true, Maxwell?
The Puritan. Pride before destruction,
A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.
Many of Strafford's Followers. Ah now! The very thing! A word in season!
A golden apple in a silver picture,
To greet Pym as he passes!
[*The doors at the back begin to open, noise and light issuing.*
Maxwell. Stand back, all!
Many of the Presbyterians. I hold with Pym! And I
Strafford's Followers. Now for the text!
He comes! Quick!
The Puritan. How hath the oppressor ceased!
The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked!
The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote
The people in wrath with a continual stroke,
That ruled the nations in his anger — he
Is persecuted and none hindereth!
[*The doors open, and* STRAFFORD *issues in the greatest disorder, and amid cries from within of* "Void the House!"
Strafford. Impeach me! Pym! I never struck, I think,
The felon on that calm insulting mouth

When it proclaimed — Pym's mouth proclaimed
me . . . God!
Was it a word, only a word that held
The outrageous blood back on my heart — which
beats!
Which beats! Some one word — "Traitor," did
he say,
Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,
Upon me?
Maxwell. In the Commons' name, their servant
Demands Lord Strafford's sword.
Strafford. What did you say?
Maxwell. The Commons bid me ask your lord-
ship's sword.
Strafford. Let us go forth: follow me, gentlemen!
Draw your swords too: cut any down that bar us.
On the King's service! Maxwell, clear the way!
[*The* Presbyterians *prepare to dispute his passage.*
Strafford. I stay: the King himself shall see me
here.
Your tablets, fellow!
[*To* MAINWARING.] Give that to the King!
Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, let be!
Nay, you shall take my sword!
[MAXWELL *advances to take it.*
Or, no — not that!
Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far,
All up to that — not that! Why, friend, you see
When the King lays your head beneath my foot
It will not pay for that. Go, all of you!
Maxwell. I dare, my lord, to disobey: none stir!
Strafford. This gentle Maxwell! — Do not touch
him, Byran!
[*To the* Presbyterians.] Whichever cur of you will
carry this

Escapes his fellow's fate. None saves his life?
None? [*Cries from within of* "STRAFFORD!"
Slingsby, I 've loved you at least: make haste!
Stab me! I have not time to tell you why.
You then, my Byran! Mainwaring, you then!
Is it because I spoke so hastily
At Allerton? The King had vexed me.
[*To the* Presbyterians.] You!
— Not even you? If I live over this,
The King is sure to have your heads, you know!
But what if I can't live this minute through?
Pym, who is there with his pursuing smile!
[*Louder cries of* "STRAFFORD!"
The King! I troubled him, stood in the way
Of his negotiations, was the one
Great obstacle to peace, the Enemy
Of Scotland: and he sent for me, from York,
My safety guaranteed — having prepared
A Parliament — I see! And at Whitehall
The Queen was whispering with Vane — I see
The trap! [*Tearing off the George.*
I tread a gew-gaw underfoot,
And cast a memory from me. One stroke, now!
[*His own* Adherents *disarm him. Renewed cries of* "STRAFFORD!"
England! I see thy arm in this and yield.
Pray you now — Pym awaits me — pray you now!

STRAFFORD *reaches the doors: they open wide.* HAMPDEN *and a crowd discovered, and, at the bar,* PYM *standing apart. As* STRAFFORD *kneels, the scene shuts.*

ACT IV

SCENE I — *Whitehall*

The KING, *the* QUEEN, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE. (VANE, HOLLAND, SAVILE, *in the background.*)

Lady Carlisle. Answer them, Hollis, for his sake! One word!

Charles. [*To* HOLLIS.] You stand, silent and cold, as though I were
Deceiving you — my friend, my playfellow
Of other times. What wonder after all?
Just so, I dreamed my People loved me.

Hollis. Sir,
It is yourself that you deceive, not me.
You 'll quit me comforted, your mind made up
That since you 've talked thus much and grieved thus much,
All you can do for Strafford has been done.

Queen. If you kill Strafford — (come, we grant you leave,
Suppose) —

Hollis. I may withdraw, sir?

Lady Carlisle. Hear them out!
'T is the last chance for Strafford! Hear them out!

Hollis. "If we kill Strafford" — on the eighteenth day
Of Strafford's trial — "We!"

Charles. Pym, my good Hollis —
Pym, I should say!

Hollis. Ah, true — sir, pardon me!
You witness our proceedings every day:
But the screened gallery, I might have guessed,
Admits of such a partial glimpse at us,
Pym takes up all the room, shuts out the view.

Still, on my honor, sir, the rest of the place
Is not unoccupied. The Commons sit
— That 's England; Ireland sends, and Scotland too,
Their representatives; the Peers that judge
Are easily distinguished; one remarks
The People here and there: but the close curtain
Must hide so much!
Queen. Acquaint your insolent crew,
This day the curtain shall be dashed aside!
It served a purpose.
Hollis. Think! This very day?
Ere Strafford rises to defend himself?
Charles. I will defend him, sir! — sanction the past
This day: it ever was my purpose. Rage
At me, not Strafford!
Lady Carlisle. Nobly! — will he not
Do nobly?
Hollis. Sir, you will do honestly;
And, for that deed, I too would be a king.
Charles. Only, to do this now! — "deaf" (in your style)
"To subjects' prayers," — I must oppose them now!
It seems their will the trial should proceed, —
So palpably their will!
Hollis. You peril much,
But it were no bright moment save for that.
Strafford, your prime support, the sole roof-tree
Which props this quaking House of Privilege,
(Floods come, winds beat, and see — the treacherous sand!)
Doubtless, if the mere putting forth an arm
Could save him, you 'd save Strafford
Charles. And they dare
Consummate calmly this great wrong! No hope?

This ineffaceable wrong! No pity then?
Hollis. No plague in store for perfidy? — Farewell!
You called me, sir — [*To* Lady Carlisle.] you, lady, bade me come
To save the Earl: I came, thank God for it,
To learn how far such perfidy can go!
You, sir, concert with me on saving him
Who have just ruined Strafford!
Charles. I? — and how?
Hollis. Eighteen days long he throws, one after one,
Pym's charges back: a blind moth-eaten law!
— He 'll break from it at last: and whom to thank?
The mouse that gnawed the lion's net for him
Got a good friend, — but he, the other mouse,
That looked on while the lion freed himself ——
Fared he so well, does any fable say?
Charles. What can you mean?
Hollis. Pym never could have proved
Strafford's design of bringing up the troops
To force this kingdom to obedience: Vane —
Your servant, not our friend, has proved it.
Charles. Vane?
Hollis. This day. Did Vane deliver up or no
Those notes which, furnished by his son to Pym,
Seal Strafford's fate?
Charles. Sir, as I live, I know
Nothing that Vane has done! What treason next?
I wash my hands of it. Vane, speak the truth!
Ask Vane himself!
Hollis. I will not speak to Vane,
Who speak to Pym and Hampden every day.
Queen. Speak to Vane's master then! What gain to him

Were Strafford's death?
Hollis. Ha? Strafford cannot turn
As you, sir, sit there — bid you forth, demand
If every hateful act were not set down
In his commission? — whether you contrived
Or no, that all the violence should seem
His work, the gentle ways — your own, — his part,
To counteract the King's kind impulses —
While . . . but you know what he could say! And then
He might produce, — mark sir! — a certain charge
To set the King's express command aside,
If need were, and be blameless. He might add . . .
Charles. Enough!
Hollis. — Who bade him break the Parliament,
Find some pretence for setting up sword-law!
Queen. Retire!
Charles. Once more, whatever Vane dared do,
I know not: he is rash, a fool — I know
Nothing of Vane!
Hollis. Well — I believe you. Sir,
Believe me, in return, that . . .
[*Turning to* Lady CARLISLE.] Gentle lady,
The few words I would say, the stones might hear
Sooner than these, — I rather speak to you,
You, with the heart! The question, trust me, takes
Another shape, to-day; not, if the King
Or England shall succumb, — but, who shall pay
The forfeit, Strafford or his master. Sir,
You loved me once: think on my warning now!
[*Goes out.*
Charles. On you and on your warning both! — Carlisle!
That paper!
Queen. But consider!

Charles. Give it me!
There, signed — will that content you? Do not speak!
You have betrayed me, Vane! See! any day,
According to the tenor of that paper,
He bids your brother bring the army up,
Strafford shall head it and take full revenge.
Seek Strafford! Let him have the same, before
He rises to defend himself!
Queen. In truth?
That your shrewd Hollis should have worked a change
Like this! You, late reluctant . . .
Charles. Say, Carlisle,
Your brother Percy brings the army up,
Falls on the Parliament —— (I 'll think of you,
My Hollis!) say, we plotted long — 't is mine.
The scheme is mine, remember! Say, I cursed
Vane's folly in your hearing! If the Earl
Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie
With you, Carlisle!
Lady Carlisle. Nay, fear not me! but still
That 's a bright moment, sir, you throw away.
Tear down the veil and save him!
Queen. Go, Carlisle
Lady Carlisle. (I shall see Strafford — speak to him: my heart
Must never beat so, then! And if I tell
The truth? What 's gained by falsehood? There they stand
Whose trade it is, whose life it is! How vain
To gild such rottenness! Strafford shall know,
Thoroughly know them!)
Queen. Trust to me! [*To* CARLISLE.] Carlisle,
You seem inclined, alone of all the Court,

To serve poor Strafford: this bold plan of yours
Merits much praise, and yet . . .
Lady Carlisle. Time presses, madam.
Queen. Yet — may it not be something premature?
Strafford defends himself to-day — reserves
Some wondrous effort, one may well suppose!
Lady Carlisle. Ay, Hollis hints as much.
Charles. Why linger then?
Haste with the scheme — my scheme: I shall be there
To watch his look. Tell him I watch his look!
Queen. Stay, we 'll precede you!
Lady Carlisle. At your pleasure.
Charles. Say —
Say, Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall!
I shall be there, remember!
Lady Carlisle. Doubt me not.
Charles. On our return, Carlisle, we wait you here!
Lady Carlisle. I 'll bring his answer. Sir, I follow you.
(Prove the King faithless, and I take away
All Strafford cares to live for: let it be ——
'T is the King's scheme!
My Strafford, I can save,
Nay, I have saved you, yet am scarce content,
Because my poor name will not cross your mind.
Strafford, how much I am unworthy you!)

SCENE II — *A Passage adjoining Westminster Hall*

Many Groups of Spectators *of the Trial.* Officers *of the Court, etc.*

1st Spectator. More crowd than ever! Not know Hampden, man?
That 's he, by Pym, Pym that is speaking now.

No, truly, if you look so high you 'll see
Little enough of either!
2nd Spectator. Stay: Pym's arm
Points like a prophet's rod.
3rd Spectator. Ay, ay, we 've heard
Some pretty speaking: yet the Earl escapes.
4th Spectator. I fear it: just a foolish word or two
About his children — and we see, forsooth,
Not England's foe in Strafford, but the man
Who, sick, half-blind . . .
2nd Spectator. What 's that Pym 's saying now
Which makes the curtains flutter? look! A hand
Clutches them. Ah! The King's hand!
5th Spectator. I had thought
Pym was not near so tall. What said he, friend?
2nd Spectator. "Nor is this way a novel way of blood,"
And the Earl turns as if to . . . look! look!
Many Spectators. There!
What ails him? no — he rallies, see — goes on,
And Strafford smiles. Strange!
An Officer. Haselrig!
Many Spectators. Friend? Friend?
The Officer. Lost, utterly lost: just when we looked for Pym
To make a stand against the ill effects
Of the Earl's speech! Is Haselrig without?
Pym's message is to him.
3rd Spectator. Now, said I true?
Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no?
1st Spectator. Never believe it, man! These notes of Vane's
Ruin the Earl.
5th Spectator. A brave end: not a whit
Less firm, less Pym all over. Then, the trial

Is closed. No — Strafford means to speak again?
An Officer. Stand back, there!
5th Spectator. Why, the Earl is coming hither!
Before the court breaks up! His brother, look, —
You 'd say he 'd deprecated some fierce act
In Strafford's mind just now.
An Officer. Stand back, I say!
2nd Spectator. Who 's the veiled woman that he talks with?
Many Spectators. Hush —
The Earl! the Earl!
[*Enter* STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY, *and other* Secretaries, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, *etc.* STRAFFORD *converses with* Lady CARLISLE.
Hollis. So near the end! Be patient —
Return!
Strafford [*to his* Secretaries]. Here — anywhere — or, 't is freshest here!
To spend one's April here, the blossom-month:
Set it down here!
[*They arrange a table, papers, etc.*
So, Pym can quail, can cower
Because I glance at him, yet more 's to do?
What 's to be answered, Slingsby? Let us end!
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Child, I refuse his offer; whatsoe'er
It be! Too late! Tell me no word of him!
'T is something, Hollis, I assure you that —
To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen days
Fighting for life and fame against a pack
Of very curs, that lie through thick and thin,
Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't say
"Strafford" if it would take my life!

Lady Carlisle. Be moved!
Glance at the paper!
Strafford. Already at my heels!
Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the track again.
Peace, child! Now, Slingsby!
[Messengers *from* LANE *and other of* STRAFFORD'S Counsel *within the Hall are coming and going during the Scene.*
Strafford [*setting himself to write and dictate*]. I shall beat you, Hollis!
Do you know that? In spite of St. John's tricks,
In spite of Pym — your Pym who shrank from me!
Eliot would have contrived it otherwise.
[*To a* Messenger.] In truth? This slip, tell Lane, contains as much
As I can call to mind about the matter.
Eliot would have disdained . . .
[*Calling after the* Messenger.] And Radcliffe, say,
The only person who could answer Pym,
Is safe in prison, just for that.
Well, well!
It had not been recorded in that case,
I baffled you.
[*To* Lady CARLISLE.] Nay, child, why look so grieved?
All 's gained without the King! You saw Pym quail?
What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,
But tranquilly resume my task as though
Nothing had intervened since I proposed
To call that traitor to account! Such tricks,
Trust me, shall not be played a second time,
Not even against Laud, with his gray hair —
Your good work, Hollis! Peace! To make amends,
You, Lucy, shall be here when I impeach

Pym and his fellows.
Hollis. Wherefore not protest
Against our whole proceeding, long ago?
Why feel indignant now? Why stand this while
Enduring patiently?
Strafford. Child, I 'll tell you —
You, and not Pym — you, the slight graceful girl
Tall for a flowering lily, and not Hollis —
Why I stood patient! I was fool enough
To see the will of England in Pym's will;
To fear, myself had wronged her, and to wait
Her judgment: when, behold, in place of it . . .
[*To a* Messenger *who whispers.*] Tell Lane to answer no such question! Law, —
I grapple with their law! I 'm here to try
My actions by their standard, not my own!
Their law allowed that levy: what' s the rest
To Pym, or Lane, any but God and me?
Lady Carlisle. The King 's so weak! Secure this chance! 'T was Vane,
Never forget, who furnished Pym the notes . . .
Strafford. Fit, — very fit, those precious notes of Vane,
To close the Trial worthily! I feared
Some spice of nobleness might linger yet
And spoil the character of all the past.
Vane eased me . . . and I will go back and say
As much — to Pym, to England! Follow me!
I have a word to say! There, my defence
Is done!
Stay! why be proud? Why care to own
My gladness, my surprise? — Nay, not surprise!
Wherefore insist upon the little pride
Of doing all myself, and sparing him
The pain? Child, say the triumph is my King's!

When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down,
One image was before me: could I fail?
Child, care not for the past, so indistinct,
Obscure — there 's nothing to forgive in it
'T is so forgotten! From this day begins
A new life, bounded on a new belief
In Charles.

Hollis. In Charles? Rather believe in Pym!
And here he comes in proof! Appeal to Pym!
Say how unfair . . .

Strafford. To Pym? I would say nothing!
I would not look upon Pym's face again.

Lady Carlisle. Stay, let me have to think I pressed your hand!

[STRAFFORD *and his friends go out.*

Enter HAMPDEN *and* VANE.

Vane. O Hampden, save the great misguided man!
Plead Strafford's cause with Pym! I have remarked
He moved no muscle when we all declaimed
Against him: you had but to breathe — he turned
Those kind calm eyes upon you.

[*Enter* PYM, *the* Solicitor-General ST. JOHN, *the* Managers *of the Trial*, FIENNES, RUDYARD, *etc.*

Rudyard. Horrible!
Till now all hearts were with you: I withdraw
For one. Too horrible! But we mistake
Your purpose, Pym: you cannot snatch away
The last spar from the drowning man.

Fiennes. He talks
With St. John of it — see, how quietly!

[*To other* Presbyterians.] You 'll join us? Strafford may deserve the worst:
But this new course is monstrous. Vane, take heart!
This Bill of his Attainder shall not have
One true man's hand to it.
Vane. Consider, Pym!
Confront your Bill, your own Bill: what is it?
You cannot catch the Earl on any charge, —
No man will say the law has hold of him
On any charge; and therefore you resolve
To take the general sense on his desert,
As though no law existed, and we met
To found one. You refer to Parliament
To speak its thought upon the abortive mass
Of half-borne-out assertions, dubious hints
Hereafter to be cleared, distortions — ay,
And wild inventions. Every man is saved
The task of fixing any single charge
On Strafford: he has but to see in him
The enemy of England.
Pym. A right scruple!
I have heard some called England's enemy
With less consideration.
Vane. Pity me!
Indeed you made me think I was your friend!
I who have murdered Strafford, how remove
That memory from me?
Pym. I absolve you, Vane.
Take you no care for aught that you have done!
Vane. John Hampden, not this Bill! Reject this Bill!
He staggers through the ordeal: let him go,
Strew no fresh fire before him! Plead for us!
When Strafford spoke, your eyes were thick with tears!

Hampden. England speaks louder: who are we, to play
The generous pardoner at her expense,
Magnanimously waive advantages,
And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill?
Vane. He was your friend.
Pym. I have heard that before.
Fiennes. And England trusts you.
Hampden. Shame, be his, who turns
The opportunity of serving her
She trusts him with, to his own mean account —
Who would look nobly frank at her expense!
Fiennes. I never thought it could have come to this.
Pym. But I have made myself familiar, Fiennes,
With this one thought — have walked, and sat, and slept,
This thought before me. I have done such things,
Being the chosen man that should destroy
The traitor. You have taken up this thought
To play with, for a gentle stimulant,
To give a dignity to idler life
By the dim prospect of emprise to come,
But ever with the softening, sure belief,
That all would end some strange way right at last.
Fiennes. Had we made out some weightier charge!
Pym. You say
That these are petty charges: can we come
To the real charge at all? There he is safe
In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy
Is not a crime, treachery not a crime:
The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when you speak
The words, but where 's the power to take revenge
Upon them? We must make occasion serve, —
The oversight shall pay for the main sin

That mocks us.
Rudyard. But this unexampled course,
This Bill!
Pym. By this, we roll the clouds away
Of precedent and custom, and at once
Bid the great beacon-light God sets in all,
The conscience of each bosom, shine upon
The guilt of Strafford: each man lay his hand
Upon his breast, and judge!
Vane. I only see
Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all beyond!
Rudyard and others. Forgive him! He would join us, now he finds
What the King counts reward! The pardon, too,
Should be your own. Yourself should bear to Strafford
The pardon of the Commons.
Pym. Meet him? Strafford?
Have we to meet once more, then? Be it so!
And yet — the prophecy seemed half fulfilled
When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my youth,
Our friendship, divers thoughts came back at once
And left me, for a time . . . 'T is very sad!
To-morrow we discuss the points of law
With Lane — to-morrow?
Vane. Not before to-morrow —
So, time enough! I knew you would relent!
Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you introduce
The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me!

Scene III — *Whitehall*

The King

Charles. My loyal servant! To defend himself
Thus irresistibly, — withholding aught

That seemed to implicate us!
We have done
Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, the future
Must recompense the past.
She tarries long.
I understand you, Strafford, now!
The scheme —
Carlisle's mad scheme — he 'll sanction it, I fear,
For love of me. 'T was too precipitate:
Before the army 's fairly on its march,
He 'll be at large: no matter.
Well, Carlisle?

Enter PYM.

Pym. Fear me not, sir: — my mission is to save,
This time.
Charles. To break thus on me! Unannounced!
Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.
Charles. No more
Of Strafford! I have heard too much from you.
Pym. I spoke, sir, for the People; will you hear
A word upon my own account?
Charles. Of Strafford?
(So turns the tide already? Have we tamed
The insolent brawler? — Strafford's eloquence
Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford, sir,
Has spoken for himself.
Pym. Sufficiently.
I would apprise you of the novel course
The People take: the Trial fails.
Charles. Yes, yes:
We are aware, sir: for your part in it
Means shall be found to thank you.
Pym. Pray you, read

This schedule! I would learn from your own mouth
— (It is a matter much concerning me) —
Whether, if two Estates of us concede
The death of Strafford, on the grounds set forth
Within that parchment, you, sir, can resolve
To grant your own consent to it. This Bill
Is framed by me. If you determine, sir,
That England's manifested will should guide
Your judgment, ere another week such will
Shall manifest itself. If not, — I cast
Aside the measure.
Charles. You can hinder, then,
The introduction of this Bill?
Pym. I can.
Charles. He is my friend, sir: I have wronged him: mark you,
Had I not wronged him, this might be. You think
Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not away,
We know you hate him) — no one else could love
Strafford: but he has saved me, some affirm.
Think of his pride! And do you know one strange,
One frightful thing? We all have used the man
As though a drudge of ours, with not a source
Of happy thoughts except in us; and yet
Strafford has wife and children, household cares,
Just as if we had never been. Ah sir,
You are moved, even you, a solitary man
Wed to your cause — to England if you will!
Pym. Yes — think, my soul — to England! Draw not back!
Charles. Prevent that Bill, sir! All your course seems fair
Till now. Why, in the end, 't is I should sign

The warrant for his death! You have said much
I ponder on; I never meant, indeed,
Strafford should serve me any more. I take
The Commons' counsel; but this Bill is yours —
Nor worthy of its leader: care not, sir,
For that, however! I will quite forget
You named it to me. You are satisfied?
Pym. Listen to me, sir! Eliot laid his hand,
Wasted and white, upon my forehead once;
Wentworth — he 's gone now! — has talked on, whole nights.
And I beside him; Hampden loves me: sir.
How can I breathe and not wish England well,
And her King well?
Charles. I thank you, sir, who leave
That King his servant. Thanks, sir!
Pym. Let me speak!
— Who may not speak again; whose spirit yearns
For a cool night after this weary day:
— Who would not have my soul turn sicker yet
In a new task, more fatal, more august,
More full of England's utter weal or woe.
I thought, sir, could I find myself with you,
After this trial, alone, as man to man —
I might say something, warn you, pray you, save —
Mark me, King Charles, save —— you!
But God must do it. Yet I warn you, sir —
(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)
As you would have no deeper question moved
— "How long the Many must endure the One,"
Assure me, sir, if England give assent
To Strafford's death, you will not interfere!
Or ——
Charles. God forsakes me. I am in a net
And cannot move. Let all be as you say!

Enter Lady CARLISLE.

Lady Carlisle. He loves you — looking beautiful with joy
Because you sent me! he would spare you all
The pain! he never dreamed you would forsake
Your servant in the evil day — nay, see
Your scheme returned! That generous heart of his!
He needs it not — or, needing it, disdains
A course that might endanger you — you, sir,
Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .
[*Seeing* PYM.] Well met!
No fear for Strafford! All that 's true and brave
On your own side shall help us: we are now
Stronger than ever.
Ha — what, sir, is this?
All is not well! What parchment have you there?
Pym. Sir, much is saved us both.
Lady Carlisle. This Bill! Your lip
Whitens — you could not read one line to me
Your voice would falter so!
Pym. No recreant yet!
The great word went from England to my soul,
And I arose. The end is very near.
Lady Carlisle. I am to save him! All have shrunk beside;
'T is only I am left. Heaven will make strong
The hand now as the heart. Then let both die!

ACT V

SCENE I — *Whitehall*

HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE

Hollis. Tell the King then! Come in with me!
Lady Carlisle. Not so!
He must not hear till it succeeds.
Hollis. Succeed?
No dream was half so vain — you 'd rescue Strafford
And outwit Pym! I cannot tell you . . . lady,
The block pursues me, and the hideous show.
To-day . . . is it to-day? And all the while
He 's sure of the King's pardon. Think, I have
To tell this man he is to die. The King
May rend his hair, for me! I 'll not see Strafford!
Lady Carlisle. Only, if I succeed, remember —— Charles
Has saved him. He would hardly value life
Unless his gift. My stanch friends wait. Go in —
You must go in to Charles!
Hollis. And all beside
Left Strafford long ago. The King has signed
The warrant for his death! the Queen was sick
Of the eternal subject. For the Court, —
The Trial was amusing in its way,
Only too much of it: the Earl withdrew
In time. But you, fragile, alone, so young
Amid rude mercenaries — you devise
A plan to save him! Even though it fails,
What shall reward you?
Lady Carlisle. I may go, you think,
To France with him? And you reward me, friend,
Who lived with Strafford even from his youth
Before he set his heart on state-affairs

And they bent down that noble brow of his.
I have learned somewhat of his latter life,
And all the future I shall know: but, Hollis,
I ought to make his youth my own as well.
Tell me, —— when he is saved!
Hollis. My gentle friend,
He should know all and love you, but 't is vain!
Lady Carlisle. Love? no — too late now! Let him love the King!
'T is the King's scheme! I have your word, remember!
We 'll keep the old delusion up. But, quick!
Quick! Each of us has work to do, beside!
Go to the King! I hope — Hollis — I hope!
Say nothing of my scheme! Hush, while we speak
Think where he is! Now for my gallant friends!
Hollis. Where is he? Calling wildly upon Charles,
Guessing his fate, pacing the prison-floor.
Let the King tell him! I 'll not look on Strafford.

Scene II — *The Tower*

Strafford *sitting with his* Children.
They sing.

O bell' andare
Per barca in mare,
Verso la sera
Di Primavera!

William. The boat 's in the broad moonlight all this while —

Verso la sera.
Di Primavera!

THE TOWER OF LONDON (BLOODY TOWER)



And the boat shoots from underneath the moon
Into the shadowy distance; only still
You hear the dipping oar —

Verso la sera,

And faint, and fainter, and then all 's quite gone,
Music and light and all, like a lost star.
Anne. But you should sleep, father: you were to sleep.
Strafford. I do sleep, Anne; or if not — you must know
There 's such a thing as . . .
William. You 're too tired to sleep?
Strafford. It will come by-and-by and all day long,
In that old quiet house I told you of:
We sleep safe there.
Anne. Why not in Ireland?
Strafford. No!
Too many dreams! — That song 's for Venice, William:
You know how Venice looks upon the map —
Isles that the mainland hardly can let go?
William. You 've been to Venice, father?
Strafford. I was young, then.
William. A city with no King; that 's why I like
Even a song that comes from Venice.
Strafford. William!
William. Oh, I know why! Anne, do you love the King?
But I 'll see Venice for myself one day.
Strafford. See many lands, boy — England last of all, —
That way you 'll love her best.

William. Why do men say
You sought to ruin her then?
Strafford. Ah, — they say that.
William. Why?
Strafford. I suppose they must have words
to say,
As you to sing.
Anne. But they make songs beside:
Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,
That called you . . . Oh, the names!
William. Don't mind her, father!
They soon left off when I cried out to them.
Strafford. We shall so soon be out of it, my boy!
'T is not worth while: who heeds a foolish song?
William. Why, not the King.
Strafford. Well: it has been the fate
Of better: and yet, — wherefore not feel sure
That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend
All the fantastic day's caprice, consign
To the low ground once more the ignoble Term,
And raise the Genius on his orb again, —
That Time will do me right?
Anne. (Shall we sing, William?
He does not look thus when we sing.)
Strafford. For Ireland,
Something is done: too little, but enough
To show what might have been.
William. (I have no heart
To sing now! Anne, how very sad he looks!
Oh, I so hate the King for all he says!)
Strafford. Forsook them! What, the common
songs will run
That I forsook the People? Nothing more?
Ay, Fame, the busy scribe, will pause, no doubt,
Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves

Noisy to be enrolled, — will register
The curious glosses, subtle notices,
Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see
Beside that plain inscription of The Name —
The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford!
[*The* Children *resume their song timidly, but break off.*

Enter HOLLIS *and an* Attendant.

Strafford. No, — Hollis? in good time! — Who is he?
Hollis. One
That must be present.
Strafford. Ah — I understand.
They will not let me see poor Laud alone.
How politic! They 'd use me by degrees
To solitude: and, just as you came in,
I was solicitous what life to lead
When Strafford's "not so much as Constable
In the King's service." Is there any means
To keep oneself awake? What would you do
After this bustle, Hollis, in my place?
Hollis. Strafford!
Strafford. Observe, not but that Pym and you
Will find me news enough — news I shall hear
Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side
At Wentworth. Garrard must be re-engaged
My newsman. Or, a better project now —
What if when all 's consummated, and the Saints
Reign, and the Senate's work goes swimmingly, —
What if I venture up, some day, unseen,
To saunter through the Town, notice how Pym,
Your tribune, likes Whitehall, drop quietly
Into a tavern, hear a point discussed,

As, whether Strafford's name were John or James —
And be myself appealed to — I, who shall
Myself have near forgotten!
Hollis. I would speak . . .
Strafford. Then you shall speak, — not now. I want just now,
To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place
Is full of ghosts.
Hollis. Nay, you must hear me, Strafford!
Strafford. Oh, readily! Only, one rare thing more, —
The minister! Who will advise the King,
Turn his Sejanus, Richelieu and what not,
And yet have health — children, for aught I know —
My patient pair of traitors! Ah, — but, William—
Does not his cheek grow thin?
William. 'T is you look thin,
Father!
Strafford. A scamper o'er the breezy wolds
Sets all to-rights.
Hollis. You cannot sure forget
A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford?
Strafford. No,
Why, no. I would not touch on that, the first.
I left you that. Well, Hollis? Say at once,
The King can find no time to set me free!
A mask at Theobald's?
Hollis. Hold: no such affair
Detains him.
Strafford. True: what needs so great a matter?
The Queen's lip may be sore. Well: when he pleases, —
Only, I want the air: it vexes flesh
To be pent up so long.
Hollis. The King — I bear

His message, Strafford: pray you, let me speak!
Strafford. Go, William! Anne, try o'er your song again! [*The* Children *retire.*
They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
I know your message: you have nothing new
To tell me: from the first I guessed as much.
I know, instead of coming here himself,
Leading me forth in public by the hand,
The King prefers to leave the door ajar
As though I were escaping — bids me trudge
While the mob gapes upon some show prepared
On the other side of the river! Give at once
His order of release! I 've heard, as well
Of certain poor manœuvres to avoid
The granting pardon at his proper risk;
First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords,
Must talk a trifle with the Commons first,
Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,
And far from blaming them, and . . . Where 's the order?
Hollis. Spare me!
Strafford. Why, he 'd not have me steal away?
With an old doublet and a steeple hat
Like Prynne's? Be smuggled into France, perhaps?
Hollis, 't is for my children! 'T was for them
I first consented to stand day by day
And give your Puritans the best of words,
Be patient, speak when called upon, observe
Their rules, and not return them prompt their lie!
What 's in that boy of mine that he should prove
Son to a prison-breaker? I shall stay
And he 'll stay with me. Charles should know as much,
He too has children!

[*Turning to* HOLLIS's Companion.] Sir, you feel for me!
No need to hide that face! Though it have looked
Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know
Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on me . . .
Your coming has my pardon, nay, my thanks:
For there is one who comes not.
Hollis. Whom forgive,
As one to die!
Strafford. True, all die, and all need
Forgiveness: I forgive him from my soul.
Hollis. 'T is a world's wonder: Strafford, you must die!
Strafford. Sir, if your errand is to set me free
This heartless jest mars much. Ha! Tears in truth?
We 'll end this! See this paper, warm — feel — warm
With lying next my heart! Whose hand is there?
Whose promise? Read, and loud for God to hear!
"Strafford shall take no hurt" — read it, I say!
"In person, honor, nor estate" —
Hollis. The King . . .
Strafford. I could unking him by a breath! You sit
Where Loudon sat, who came to prophesy
The certain end, and offer me Pym's grace
If I 'd renounce the King: and I stood firm
On the King's faith. The King who lives . . .
Hollis. To sign
The warrant for your death.
Strafford. "Put not your trust
In princes, neither in the sons of men,
In whom is no salvation!"
Hollis. Trust in God!

The scaffold is prepared: they wait for you:
He has consented. Cast the earth behind!
Charles. You would not see me, Strafford, at your foot!
It was wrung from me! Only, curse me not!
Hollis [*to* STRAFFORD]. As you hope grace and pardon in your need.
Be merciful to this most wretched man.
[*Voices from within.*

Verso la sera
Di Primavera.

Strafford. You 'll be good to those children, sir? I know
You 'll not believe her, even should the Queen
Think they take after one they rarely saw.
I had intended that my son should live
A stranger to these matters: but you are
So utterly deprived of friends! He too
Must serve you — will you not be good to him?
Or, stay, sir, do not promise — do not swear!
You, Hollis — do the best you can for me!
I 've not a soul to trust to: Wandesford 's dead,
And you 've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn comes next:
I 've found small time of late for my affairs,
But I trust any of you, Pym himself —
No one could hurt them: there 's an infant, too.
These tedious cares! Your Majesty could spare them.
Nay — pardon me, my King! I had forgotten
Your education, trials, much temptation,
Some weakness: there escaped a peevish word —
'T is gone: I bless you at the last. You know

All 's between you and me: what has the world
To do with it? Farewell!
Charles [at the door]. Balfour! Balfour!

Enter BALFOUR.

The Parliament! — go to them: I grant all
Demands. Their sittings shall be permanent:
Tell them to keep their money if they will:
I 'll come to them for every coat I wear
And every crust I eat: only I choose
To pardon Strafford. As the Queen shall choose!
— You never heard the People howl for blood,
Beside!

Balfour. Your Majesty may hear them now:
The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out:
Please you retire!

Charles. Take all the troops, Balfour!

Balfour. There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.

Charles. Come with me, Strafford! You 'll not fear, at least!

Strafford. Balfour, say nothing to the world of this!

I charge you, as a dying man, forget
You gazed upon this agony of one . . .
Of one . . . or if . . . why, you may say, Balfour,
The King was sorry: 't is no shame in him:
Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,
And that I walked the lighter to the block
Because of it. I shall walk lightly, sir!
Earth fades, heaven breaks on me: I shall stand next
Before God's throne: the moment 's close at hand
When man the first, last time, has leave to lay
His whole heart bare before its Maker, leave

To clear up the long error of a life
And choose one happiness for evermore.
With all mortality about me, Charles,
The sudden wreck, the dregs of violent death —
What if, despite the opening angel-song,
There penetrate one prayer for you? Be saved
Through me! Bear witness, no one could prevent
My death! Lead on! ere he awake — best, now!
All must be ready: did you say, Balfour,
The crowd began to murmur? They 'll be kept
Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's!
Now! But tread softly — children are at play
In the next room. Precede! I follow —

Enter Lady CARLISLE, *with many* Attendants.

Lady Carlisle. Me!
Follow me, Strafford, and be saved! The King?
[*To the* KING.] Well — as you ordered, they are ranged without,
The convoy . . . [*seeing the* KING'S *state.*]
[*To* STRAFFORD.] You know all, then! Why, I thought
It looked best that the King should save you, — Charles
Alone; 't is a shame that you should owe me aught.
Or no, not shame! Strafford, you 'll not feel shame
At being saved by me?
Hollis. All true! Oh Strafford,
She saves you! all her deed! this lady's deed!
And is the boat in readiness? You, friend,
Are Billingsley, no doubt. Speak to her, Strafford!
See how she trembles, waiting for your voice!
The world 's to learn its bravest story yet.
Lady Carlisle. Talk afterward! Long nights in France enough,

To sit beneath the vines and talk of home.
Strafford. You love me, child? Ah, Strafford can be loved
As well as Vane! I could escape, then?
Lady Carlisle. Haste!
Advance the torches, Bryan!
Strafford. I will die.
They call me proud: but England had no right,
When she encountered me—her strength to mine—
To find the chosen foe a craven. Girl,
I fought her to the utterance, I fell,
I am hers now, and I will die! Beside,
The lookers-on! Eliot is all about
This place, with his most uncomplaining brow.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford!
Strafford. I think if you could know how much
I love you, you would be repaid, my friend!
Lady Carlisle. Then, for my sake!
Strafford. Even for your sweet sake,
I stay.
Hollis. For *their* sake!
Strafford. To bequeath a stain?
Leave me! Girl, humor me and let me die!
Lady Carlisle. Bid him escape — wake, King! Bid him escape!
Strafford. True, I will go! Die, and forsake the King?
I 'll not draw back from the last service.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford!
Strafford. And, after all, what is disgrace to me?
Let us come, child! That it should end this way!
Lead then! but I feel strangely: it was not
To end this way.
Lady Carlisle. Lean — lean on me.
Strafford. My King!

Oh, had he trusted me — his friend of friends!
Lady Carlisle. I can support him, Hollis!
Strafford. Not this way!
This gate — I dreamed of it, this very gate.
Lady Carlisle. It opens on the river: our good boat
Is moored below, our friends are there.
Strafford. The same:
Only with something ominous and dark,
Fatal, inevitable.
Lady Carlisle. Strafford! Strafford!
Strafford. Not by this gate! I feel what will be there!
I dreamed of it, I tell you: touch it not!
Lady Carlisle. To save the King, — Strafford, to save the King!
[*As* STRAFFORD *opens the door,* PYM *is discovered with* HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.* STRAFFORD *falls back;* PYM *follows slowly and confronts him.*
Pym. Have I done well? Speak, England! Whose sole sake
I still have labored for, with disregard
To my own heart, — for whom my youth was made
Barren, my manhood waste, to offer up
Her sacrifice — this friend, this Wentworth here —
Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,
And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,
I hunted by all means (trusting that she
Would sanctify all means) even to the block
Which waits for him. And saying this, I feel
No bitterer pang than first I felt, the hour
I swore that Wentworth might leave us, but I
Would never leave him: I do leave him now.
I render up my charge (be witness, God!)
To England who imposed it. I have done

Her bidding — poorly, wrongly, — it may be,
With ill effects — for I am weak, a man:
Still, I have done my best, my human best,
Not faltering for a moment. It is done.
And this said, if I say . . . yes, I will say
I never loved but one man — David not
More Jonathan! Even thus, I love him now:
And look for my chief portion in that world
Where great hearts led astray are turned again,
(Soon it may be, and, certes, will be soon:
My mission over, I shall not live long,) —
Ay, here I know I talk — I dare and must,
Of England, and her great reward, as all
I look for there; but in my inmost heart,
Believe, I think of stealing quite away
To walk once more with Wentworth — my youth's friend
Purged from all error, gloriously renewed,
And Eliot shall not blame us. Then indeed . . .
This is no meeting, Wentworth! Tears increase
Too hot. A thin mist — is it blood? — enwraps
The face I loved once. Then, the meeting be!

Strafford. I have loved England too; we 'll meet then, Pym.

As well die now! Youth is the only time
To think and to decide on a great course:
Manhood with action follows; but 't is dreary,
To have to alter our whole life in age —
The time past, the strength gone! As well die now.
When we meet, Pym, I 'd be set right — not now!
Best die. Then if there 's any fault, fault too
Dies, smothered up. Poor gray old little Laud
May dream his dream out, of a perfect Church,
In some blind corner. And there 's no one left.
I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym!

And yet, I know not: I shall not be there:
Friends fail — if he have any. And he 's weak,
And loves the Queen, and . . . Oh, my fate is nothing —
Nothing! But not that awful head — not that!
Pym. If England shall declare such will to me.
Strafford. Pym, you help England! I, that am to die,
What I must see! 't is here — all here! My God,
Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,
How thou wilt plague him, satiating hell!
What? England that you help, become through you
A green and putrefying charnel, left
Our children . . . some of us have children, Pym —
Some who, without that, still must ever wear
A darkened brow, an over-serious look,
And never properly be young! No word?
What if I curse you? Send a strong curse forth
Clothed from my heart, lapped round with horror till
She 's fit with her white face to walk the world
Scaring kind natures from your cause and you —
Then to sit down with you at the board-head,
The gathering for prayer . . . O speak, but speak!
. . . Creep up, and quietly follow each one home,
You, you, you, be a nestling care for each
To sleep with, — hardly moaning in his dreams,
She gnaws so quietly, — till, lo he starts,
Gets off with half a heart eaten away!
Oh, shall you 'scape with less if she 's my child?
You will not say a word — to me — to Him?
Pym. If England shall declare such will to me . . .
Strafford. No, not for England now, not for Heaven now, —
See, Pym, for my sake, mine who kneel to you!
There, I will thank you for the death, my friend!

This is the meeting: let me love you well!
Pym. England, — I am thine own! Dost thou exact
That service? I obey thee to the end.
Strafford. O God, I shall die first — I shall die first!

SORDELLO

1840

TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON

DEAR FRIEND, — Let the next poem be introduced by your name, therefore remembered along with one of the deepest of my affections, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me. I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might, — instead of what the few must, — like: but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so — you, with many known and unknown to me, think so — others may one day think so; and whether my attempt remain for them or not, I trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours,

R. B.

LONDON: *June 9, 1863.*

BOOK THE FIRST

WHO will, may hear Sordello's story told:
His story? Who believes me shall behold

The man, pursue his fortunes to the end,
Like me: for as the friendless-people's friend
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin
Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out
Sordello, compassed murkily about
With ravage of six long sad hundred years.
Only believe me. Ye believe?
Appears
Verona . . . Never, — I should warn you first, —
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell
A story I could body forth so well
By making speak, myself kept out of view,
The very man as he was wont to do,
And leaving you to say the rest for him.
Since, though I might be proud to see the dim
Abysmal past divide its hateful surge,
Letting of all men this one man emerge
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,
I should delight in watching first to last
His progress as you watch it, not a whit
More in the secret than yourselves who sit
Fresh-chapleted to listen. But it seems
Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,
Makers of quite new men, producing them,
Would best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem
The wearer's quality; or take their stand,
Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand,
Beside him. So, for once I face ye, friends,
Summoned together from the world's four ends,
Dropped down from heaven or cast up from hell,
To hear the story I propose to tell.
Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick,
Catching the dead, if fate denies the quick,

And shaming her; 't is not for fate to choose
Silence or song because she can refuse
Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache
Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake:
I have experienced something of her spite;
But there 's a realm wherein she has no right
And I have many lovers. Say, but few
Friends fate accords me? Here they are: now view
The host I muster! Many a lighted face
Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace;
What else should tempt them back to taste our air
Except to see how their successors fare?
My audience! and they sit, each ghostly man
Striving to look as living as he can,
Brother by breathing brother; thou art set,
Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I 'll not fret
A wondrous soul of them, nor move death's spleen
Who loves not to unlock them. Friends! I mean
The living in good earnest — ye elect
Chiefly for love — suppose not I reject
Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep,
Some fit occasion, forth, for fear ye sleep,
To glean your bland approvals. Then, appear,
Verona! stay — thou, spirit, come not near
Now — not this time desert thy cloudy place
To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face!
I need not fear this audience, I make free
With them, but then this is no place for thee!
The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown
Up out of memories of Marathon,
Would echo like his own sword's griding screech
Braying a Persian shield, — the silver speech
Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,
Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in

The knights to tilt, — wert thou to hear! What heart
Have I to play my puppets, bear my part
Before these worthies?
Lo, the past is hurled
In twain: up-thrust, out-staggering on the world,
Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears
Its outline, kindles at the core, appears
Verona. 'T is six hundred years and more
Since an event. The Second Friedrich wore
The purple, and the Third Honorius filled
The holy chair. That autumn eve was stilled:
A last remains of sunset dimly burned
O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame turned
By the wind back upon its bearer's hand
In one long flare of crimson; as a brand,
The woods beneath lay black. A single eye
From all Verona cared for the soft sky.
But, gathering in its ancient market-place,
Talked group with restless group; and not a face
But wrath made livid, for among them were
Death's stanch purveyors, such as have in care
To feast him. Fear had long since taken root
In every breast, and now these crushed its fruit,
The ripe hate, like a wine: to note the way
It worked while each grew drunk! Men grave and gray
Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro,
Letting the silent luxury trickle slow
About the hollows where a heart should be;
But the young gulped with a delirious glee
Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood
At the fierce news: for, be it understood,
Envoys apprised Verona that her prince
Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since

A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust
Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust
With Ecelin Romano, from his seat
Ferrara, — over zealous in the feat
And stumbling on a peril unaware,
Was captive, trammelled in his proper snare,
They phrase it, taken by his own intrigue.
Immediate succor from the Lombard League
Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope.
For Azzo, therefore, and his fellow-hope
Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast!
Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast.
"Prone is the purple pavis; Este makes
Mirth for the devil when he undertakes
To play the Ecelin; as if it cost
Merely your pushing-by to gain a post
Like his! The patron tells ye, once for all,
There be sound reasons that preferment fall
On our beloved" . . .
"Duke o' the Rood, why not?"
Shouted an Estian, "grudge ye such a lot?
The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own.
Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown,
That quick with prey enough her hunger blunts,
And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts."
"Taurello," quoth an envoy, "as in wane
Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain
To fly but forced the earth his couch to make
Far inland, till his friend the tempest wake,
Waits he the Kaiser's coming; and as yet
That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps: but let
Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs
The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs
The sea it means to cross because of him.
Sinketh the breeze? His hope-sick eye grows dim;

Creep closer on the creature! Every day
Strengthens the Pontiff; Ecelin, they say,
Dozes now at Oliero, with dry lips
Telling upon his perished finger-tips
How many ancestors are to depose
Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze
Deposits him in hell. So, Guelfs rebuilt
Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt
When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet
Buccio Virtù — God's wafer, and the street
Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm
With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm!
This could not last. Off Salinguerra went
To Padua, Podestà, 'with pure intent,'
Said he, 'my presence, judged the single bar
'To permanent tranquillity, may jar
No longer' — so! his back is fairly turned?
The pair of goodly palaces are burned,
The gardens ravaged, and our Guelfs laugh, drunk
A week with joy. The nets, their laughter sunk
In sobs of blood, for they found, some strange way,
Old Salinguerra back again — I say,
Old Salinguerra in the town once more
Uprooting, overturning, flame before,
Blood fetlock-high beneath him. Azzo fled;
Who 'scaped the carnage followed; then the dead
Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,
He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone,
Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce
Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,
On the gorged bird. The burghers ground their teeth
To see troop after troop encamp beneath
I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch
It took so many patient months to snatch

Out of the marsh; while just within their walls
Men fed on men. At length Taurello calls
A parley: 'let the Count wind up the war!'
Richard, light-hearted as a plunging star,
Agrees to enter for the kindest ends
Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,
No horse-boy more, for fear your timid sort
Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.
Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog;
'Ten, twenty, thirty, — curse the catalogue
Of burnt Guelf houses! Strange, Taurello shows
Not the least sign of life' — whereat arose
A general growl: 'How? With his victors by?
I and my Veronese? My troops and I?
Receive us, was your word?' So jogged they on,
Nor laughed their host too openly: once gone
Into the trap! — "
Six hundred years ago!
Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe
(Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,
Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills
His sprawling path through letters anciently
Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye)
When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask,
Flung John of Brienne's favor from his casque,
Forswore crusading, had no mind to leave
Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve
Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,
Or make the Alps less easy to recross;
And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,
Was excommunicate that very year.
"The triple-bearded Teuton come to life!"
Groaned the Great League; and, arming for the strife,
Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,

Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,
Its cry: what cry?
"The Emperor to come!"
His crowd of feudatories, all and some,
That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears, shields,
One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,
Scattered anon, took station here and there,
And carried it, till now, with little care —
Cannot but cry for him; how else rebut
Us longer? — cliffs, an earthquake suffered jut
In the mid-sea, each domineering crest
Which naught save such another throe can wrest
From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown
Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown
Too thick, too fast accumulating round,
Too sure to over-riot and confound
Ere long each brilliant islet with itself,
Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf,
Whirling the sea-drift wide: alas, the bruised
And sullen wreck! Sunlight to be diffused
For that! — sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at first,
The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst
Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled main,
And, shattered by those rocks, took hold again,
So kindly blazed it — that same blaze to brood
O'er every cluster of the multitude
Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments,
An emulous exchange of pulses, vents
Of nature into nature; till some growth
Unfancied yet, exuberantly clothe
A surface solid now, continuous, one:
"The Pope, for us the People, who begun
The People, carries on the People thus,
To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us!"

See you?
Or say, Two Principles that live
Each fitly by its Representative.
"Hill-cat" — who called him so? — the gracefullest
Adventurer, the ambiguous stranger-guest
Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,
Those talons to their sheath!) whose velvet purr
Soothes jealous neighbors when a Saxon scout
— Arpo or Yoland, is it? — one without
A country or a name, presumes to couch
Beside their noblest; until men avouch
That, of all Houses in the Trevisan,
Conrad descries no fitter, rear or van,
Than Ecelo! They laughed as they enrolled
That name at Milan on the page of gold,
Godego's lord, — Ramon, Marostica,
Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria,
And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief!
No laughter when his son, "the Lombard Chief"
Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent
To Italy along the Vale of Trent,
Welcomed him at Roncaglia! Sadness now —
The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,
The Asolan and Euganean hills,
The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills
Them all, for Ecelin vouchsafes to stay
Among and care about them; day by day
Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,
A castle building to defend a cot,
A cot built for a castle to defend,
Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end
To boasts how mountain ridge may join with ridge
By sunken gallery and soaring bridge.
He takes, in brief, a figure that beseems
The griesliest nightmare of the Church's dreams,

— A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged
From its old interests, and nowise changed
By its new neighborhood: perchance the vaunt
Of Otho, "my own Este shall supplant
Your Este," come to pass. The sire led in
A son as cruel; and this Ecelin
Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall
And curling and compliant; but for all
Romano (so they styled him) throve, that neck
Of his so pinched and white, that hungry cheek
Proved 't was some fiend, not him, the man's-flesh went
To feed: whereas Romano's instrument,
Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole
I' the world, a tree whose boughs were slipt the bole
Successively, why should not he shed blood
To further a design? Men understood
Living was pleasant to him as he wore
His careless surcoat, glanced some missive o'er,
Propped on his truncheon in the public way,
While his lord lifted writhen hands to pray,
Lost at Oliero's convent.
Hill-cats, face
Our Azzo, our Guelf Lion! Why disgrace
A worthiness conspicuous near and far
(Atii at Rome while free and consular,
Este at Padua who repulsed the Hun)
By trumpeting the Church's princely son?
— Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,
Ancona's march, Ferrara's . . . ask, in fine,
Our chronicles, commenced when some old monk
Found it intolerable to be sunk
(Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)
Quite out of summer while alive and well:

Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,
'Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,
Striving to coax from his decrepit brains
The reason Father Porphyry took pains
To blot those ten lines out which used to stand
First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.
The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore
Was vested in a certain Twenty-four;
And while within his palace these debate
Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,
Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare
Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care
For aught that 's seen or heard until we shut
The smother in, the lights, all noises but
The carroch's booming: safe at last! Why strange
Such a recess should lurk behind a range
Of banquet rooms? Your finger — thus — you push
A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush
Upon the banqueters, select your prey,
Waiting (the slaughter-weapons in the way
Strewing this very bench) with sharpened ear
A preconcerted signal to appear;
Or if you simply crouch with beating heart,
Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part
To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now;
Nor any . . . does that one man sleep whose brow
The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er?
What woman stood beside him? not the more
Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes
Because that arras fell between! Her wise
And lulling words are yet about the room,
Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom
Down even to her vesture's creeping stir.
And so reclines he, saturate with her,

Until an outcry from the square beneath
Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to breathe,
Above the cunning element, and shakes
The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks
On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,
The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit
Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away
Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying day,
In his wool wedding-robe.
For he — for he,
Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy,
(If I should falter now) — for he is thine!
Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!
A herald-star I know thou didst absorb
Relentless into the consummate orb
That scared it from its right to roll along
A sempiternal path with dance and song
Fulfilling its allotted period,
Serenest of the progeny of God —
Who yet resigns it not! His darling stoops
With no quenched lights, desponds with no blank troops
Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent
Utterly with thee, its shy element
Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear.
Still, what if I approach the august sphere
Named now with only one name, disentwine
That under-current soft and argentine
From its fierce mate in the majestic mass
Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass
In John's transcendent vision, — launch once more
That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore
Where glutted hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,
Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume —
Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope

The Entrance into Hell

(Drawing by Evelyn Paul)

"Dante, pacer of the shore
Where glutted hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,
Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume."

– Sordello.

Into a darkness quieted by hope;
Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye
In gracious twilights where his chosen lie, —
I would do this! If I should falter now!
 In Mantua territory half is slough,
Half pine-tree forest; maples, scarlet oaks
Breed o'er the river-beds; even Mincio chokes
With sand the summer through: but 't is morass
In winter up to Mantua walls. There was,
Some thirty years before this evening's coil,
One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil,
Goito; just a castle built amid
A few low mountains; firs and larches hid
Their main defiles, and rings of vineyard bound
The rest. Some captured creature in a pound,
Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress,
Secure beside in its own loveliness,
So peered with airy head, below. above,
The castle at its toils, the lapwings love
To glean among at grape-time. Pass within.
A maze of corridors contrived for sin,
Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past,
You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last
A maple-panelled room: that haze which seems
Floating about the panel, if there gleams
A sunbeam over it, will turn to gold
And in light-graven characters unfold
The Arab's wisdom everywhere; what shade
Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made,
Cut like a company of palms to prop
The roof, each kissing top entwined with top,
Leaning together; in the carver's mind
Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek combined
With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair
Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear

A vintage, graceful sister-palms! But quick
To the main wonder, now. A vault, see; thick
Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits
Across the buttress suffer light by fits
Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay, stoop —
A dullish gray-streaked cumbrous font, a group
Round it, — each side of it, where'er one sees, —
Upholds it; shrinking Caryatides
Of just-tinged marble like Eve's lilied flesh
Beneath her maker's finger when the fresh
First pulse of life shot brightening the snow.
The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so
They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed;
Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,
Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil
Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,
Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length
Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength
Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.
So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,
Like priestesses because of sin impure
Penanced forever, who resigned endure,
Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs.
And every eve, Sordello's visit begs
Pardon for them: constant as eve he came
To sit beside each in her turn, the same
As one of them, a certain space: and awe
Made a great indistinctness till he saw
Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress-chinks,
Gold seven times globed; surely our maiden shrinks
And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain
Her load were lightened, one shade less the stain
Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead slipt
From off the rosary whereby the crypt
Keeps count of the contritions of its charge?

Then with a step more light, a heart more large,
He may depart, leave her and every one
To linger out the penance in mute stone.
Ah, but Sordello? 'T is the tale I mean
To tell you.
In this castle may be seen,
On the hill-tops, or underneath the vines,
Or eastward by the mound of firs and pines
That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,
A slender boy in a loose page's dress,
Sordello: do but look on him awhile
Watching ('t is autumn) with an earnest smile
The noisy flock of thievish birds at work
Among the yellowing vineyards; see him lurk
('T is winter with its sullenest of storms)
Beside that arras length of broidered forms,
On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light
Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter bright
— Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,
And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed,
Auria, and their Child, with all his wives
From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives,
Lady of the castle, Adelaide. His face
— Look, now he turns away! Yourselves shall trace
(The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,
A sharp and restless lip, so well combine
With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive
Delight at every sense; you can believe
Sordello foremost in the regal class
Nature has broadly severed from her mass
Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames
Some happy lands, that have luxurious names,
For loose fertility; a footfall there
Suffices to upturn to the warm air
Half-germinating spices; mere decay

Produces richer life; and day by day
New pollen on the lily-petal grows,
And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.
You recognize at once the finer dress
Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness
At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled
(As though she would not trust them with her world)
A veil that shows a sky not near so blue
And lets but half the sun look fervid through.
How can such love? — like souls on each full-fraught
Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught
Beyond its beauty, till exceeding love
Becomes an aching weight; and, to remove
A curse that haunts such natures — to preclude
Their finding out themselves can work no good
To what they love nor make it very blest
By their endeavor, — they are fain invest
The lifeless thing with life from their own soul,
Availing it to purpose, to control,
To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy
And separate interests that may employ
That beauty fitly, for its proper sake.
Nor rest they here; fresh births of beauty wake
Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,
With every mode of loveliness: then cast
Inferior idols off their borrowed crown
Before a coming glory. Up and down
Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine
To throb the secret forth; a touch divine —
And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod;
Visibly through his garden walketh God.
 So fare they. Now revert. One character
Denotes them through the progress and the stir, —
A need to blend with each external charm,

Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm, —
In something not themselves; they would belong
To what they worship — stronger and more strong
Thus prodigally fed — which gathers shape
And feature, soon imprisons past escape
The votary framed to love and to submit
Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it,
Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs
A legend; light had birth ere moons and suns,
Flowing through space a river and alone,
Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were strown
Hither and thither, foundering and blind:
When into each of them rushed light -- to find
Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance.
Let such forego their just inheritance!
For there 's a class that eagerly looks, too,
On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,
Proclaims each new revealment born a twin
With a distinctest consciousness within,
Referring still the quality, now first
Revealed, to their own soul — its instinct nursed
In silence, now remembered better, shown
More thoroughly, but not the less their own;
A dream come true; the special exercise
Of any special function that implies
The being fair, or good, or wise, or strong,
Dormant within their nature all along —
Whose fault? So, homage, other souls direct
Without, turns inward. "How should this deject
Thee, soul?" they murmur; "wherefore strength be quelled
Because, its trivial accidents withheld,
Organs are missed that clog the world, inert,
Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,
Like thine — existence cannot satiate,

Cannot surprise? Laugh thou at envious fate,
Who, from earth's simplest combination stampt
With individuality — uncrampt
By living its faint elemental life,
Dost soar to heaven's complexest essence, rife
With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,
Equal to being all!"
In truth? Thou hast
Life, then — wilt challenge life for us: our race
Is vindicated so, obtains its place
In thy ascent, the first of us; whom we
May follow, to the meanest, finally,
With our more bounded wills?
Ah, but to find
A certain mood enervate such a mind,
Counsel it slumber in the solitude
Thus reached nor, stooping, task for mankind's good
Its nature just as life and time accord
"— Too narrow an arena to reward
Emprise — the world's occasion worthless since
Not absolutely fitted to evince
Its mastery!" Or if yet worse befall,
And a desire possess it to put all
That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere
Contain it, — to display completely here
The mastery another life should learn,
Thrusting in time eternity's concern, —
So that Sordello . . .
Fool, who spied the mark
Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark
Already as he loiters? Born just now,
With the new century, beside the glow
And efflorescence out of barbarism;
Witness a Greek or two from the abysm
That stray through Florence-town with studious air,

Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair:
If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet!
While at Siena is Guidone set,
Forehead on hand; a painful birth must be
Matured ere Saint Eufemia's sacristy
Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze
At the moon: look you! The same orange haze, —
The same blue stripe round that — and, in the midst,
Thy spectral whiteness, Mother-maid, who didst
Pursue the dizzy painter!
Woe, then, worth
Any officious babble letting forth
The leprosy confirmed and ruinous
To spirit lodged in a contracted house!
Go back to the beginning, rather; blend
It gently with Sordello's life; the end
Is piteous, you may see, but much between
Pleasant enough. Meantime, some pyx to screen
The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon
The goblin! So they found at Babylon,
(Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage Antonine)
Sacking the city, by Appollo's shrine,
In rummaging among the rarities,
A certain coffer; he who made the prize
Opened it greedily; and out there curled
Just such another plague, for half the world
Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and couch asquat,
Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot
Until your time is ripe! The coffer-lid
Is fastened, and the coffer safely hid
Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of gold.
Who will may hear Sordello's story told,
And how he never could remember when
He dwelt not at Goito. Calmly, then,
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's

Glided his youth away; beyond the glades
On the fir-forest border, and the rim
Of the low range of mountain, was for him
No other world: but this appeared his own
To wander through at pleasure and alone.
The castle too seemed empty; far and wide
Might he disport; only the northern side
Lay under a mysterious interdict —
Slight, just enough remembered to restrict
His roaming to the corridors, the vault
Where those font-bearers expiate their fault,
The maple-chamber, and the little nooks
And nests, and breezy parapet that looks
Over the woods to Mantua: there he strolled.
Some foreign women-servants, very old,
Tended and crept about him — all his clue
To the world's business and embroiled ado
Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most.
And first a simple sense of life engrossed
Sordello in his drowsy Paradise;
The day's adventures for the day suffice —
Its constant tribute of perceptions strange,
With sleep and stir in healthy interchange,
Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease
Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees,
Eats the life out of every luscious plant,
And, when September finds them sere or scant,
Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite,
And hies him after unforeseen delight.
So fed Sordello, not a shard dissheathed;
As ever, round each new discovery, wreathed
Luxuriantly the fancies infantine
His admiration, bent on making fine
Its novel friend at any risk, would fling
In gay profusion forth: a ficklest king,

Confessed those minions! — eager to dispense
So much from his own stock of thought and sense
As might enable each to stand alone
And serve him for a fellow; with his own,
Joining the qualities that just before
Had graced some older favorite. Thus they wore
A fluctuating halo, yesterday
Set flicker and to-morrow filched away, —
Those upland objects each of separate name,
Each with an aspect never twice the same,
Waxing and waning as the new-born host
Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,
Gave to familiar things a face grotesque;
Only, preserving through the mad burlesque
A grave regard. Conceive! the orpine patch
Blossoming earliest on the log-house thatch
The day those archers wound along the vines —
Related to the Chief that left their lines
To climb with clinking step the northern stair
Up to the solitary chambers where
Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall:
He o'er-festooning every interval,
As the adventurous spider, making light
Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,
From barbican to battlement: so flung
Fantasies forth and in their centre swung
Our architect, — the breezy morning fresh
Above, and merry, — all his waving mesh
Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged.
This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged
To laying such a spangled fabric low
Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow.
But its abundant will was balked here: doubt
Rose tardily in one so fenced about

From most that nurtures judgment, — care and pain:
Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,
Less favored, to adopt betimes and force
Stead us, diverted from our natural course
Of joys — contrive some yet amid the dearth,
Vary and render them, it may be, worth
Most we forego. Suppose Sordello hence
Selfish enough, without a moral sense
However feeble; what informed the boy
Others desired a portion in his joy?
Or say a ruthful chance broke woof and warp —
A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp,
A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,
A bird with unsoiled breast and unfilmed eyes
Warm in the brake — could these undo the trance
Lapping Sordello? Not a circumstance
That makes for you, friend Naddo! Eat fern-seed
And peer beside us and report indeed
If (your word) "genius" dawned with throes and stings
And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs,
Summers, and winters quietly came and went.
Time put at length that period to content,
By right the world should have imposed: bereft
Of its good offices, Sordello, left
To study his companions, managed rip
Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,
Core with its crust, their nature with his own:
Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone.
As if the poppy felt with him! Though he
Partook the poppy's red effrontery
Till Autumn spoiled their fleering quite with rain,
And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling crane

Lay bare. That 's gone: yet why renounce, for that,
His disenchanted tributaries — flat
Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn,
Their simple presence might not well be borne
Whose parley was a transport once: recall
The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all,
A poppy: — why distrust the evidence
Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense?
The new-born judgment, answered, "little boots
Beholding other creatures' attributes
And having none!" or, say that it sufficed,
"Yet, could one but possess, oneself," (enticed
Judgment) "some special office!" Naught beside
Serves you? "Well then, be somehow justified
For this ignoble wish to circumscribe
And concentrate, rather than swell, the tribe
Of actual pleasures: what, now, from without
Effects it? — proves, despite a lurking doubt,
Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared?
That, tasting joys by proxy thus, you fared
The better for them?" Thus much craved his soul.
Alas, from the beginning love is whole
And true; if sure of naught beside, most sure
Of its own truth at least; nor may endure
A crowd to see its face, that cannot know
How hot the pulses throb its heart below:
While its own helplessness and utter want
Of means to worthily be ministrant
To what it worships, do but fan the more
Its flame, exalt the idol far before
Itself as it would have it ever be.
Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,
Coerced and put to shame, retaining will,
Care little, take mysterious comfort still,

But look forth tremblingly to ascertain
If others judge their claims not urged in vain,
And say for them their stifled thoughts aloud.
So, they must ever live before a crowd:
— "Vanity," Naddo tells you.
Whence contrive
A crowd, now? From these women just alive,
That archer-troop? Forth glided — not alone
Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,
Nor Adelaide (bent double o'er a scroll,
One maiden at her knees, that eve, his soul
Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd glooms
On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird perfumes,
Started the meagre Tuscan up, — her eyes,
The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise)
— But the entire out-world: whatever, scraps
And snatches, song and story, dreams perhaps,
Conceited the world's offices, and he
Had hitherto transferred to flower or tree,
Not counted a befitting heritage
Each, of its own right, singly to engage
Some man, no other, — such now dared to stand
Alone. Strength, wisdom, grace on every hand
Soon disengaged themselves, and he discerned
A sort of human life: at least, was turned
A stream of lifelike figures through his brain.
Lord, liegeman, valvassor and suzerain,
Ere he could choose, surrounded him; a stuff
To work his pleasure on; there, sure enough:
But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze?
Are they to simply testify their ways
He who convoked them sends his soul along
With the cloud's thunder or a dove's brood-song?
— While they live each his life, boast each his own
Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone

In some one point where something dearest loved
Is easiest gained — far worthier to be proved
Than aught he envies in the forest-wights!
No simple and self-evident delights,
But mixed desires of unimagined range,
Contrasts or combinations, new and strange,
Irksome perhaps, yet plainly recognized
By this, the sudden company — loves prized
By those who are to prize his own amount
Of loves. Once care because such make account,
Allow that foreign recognitions stamp
The current value, and his crowd shall vamp
Him counterfeits enough; and so their print
Be on the piece, 't is gold, attests the mint,
And "good," pronounce they whom his new appeal
Is made to: if their casual print conceal —
This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss
What he has lived without, nor felt the loss —
Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,
— What matter? So must speech expand the dumb
Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sordello, late
Whom no poor woodland-sights could satiate,
Betakes himself to study hungrily
Just what the puppets his crude phantasy
Supposes notablest,—popes, kings, priests, knights,—
May please to promulgate for appetites;
Accepting all their artificial joys
Not as he views them, but as he employs
Each shape to estimate the other's stock
Of attributes, whereon — a marshalled flock
Of authorized enjoyments — he may spend
Himself, be men, now, as he used to blend
With tree and flower — nay more entirely, else
'T were mockery: for instance, "How excels
My life that chieftain's?" (who apprised the youth

Ecelin, here, becomes this month, in truth,
Imperial Vicar?) "Turns he in his tent
Remissly? Be it so — my head is bent
Deliciously amid my girls to sleep.
What if he stalks the Trentine-pass? Yon steep
I climbed an hour ago with little toil:
We are alike there. But can I, too, foil
The Guelf's paid stabber, carelessly afford
Saint Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o' the sword
Baffling the treason in a moment?" Here
No rescue! Poppy he is none, but peer
To Ecelin, assuredly: his hand,
Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand
With Ecelin's success — try, now! He soon
Was satisfied, returned as to the moon
From earth; left each abortive boy's-attempt
For feats, from failure happily exempt,
In fancy at his beck. "One day I will
Accomplish it! Are they not older still
— Not grown-up men and women? 'T is beside
Only a dream; and though I must abide
With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent
For all myself, acquire an instrument
For acting what these people act; my soul
Hunting a body out may gain its whole
Desire some day!" How else express chagrin
And resignation, show the hope steal in
With which he let sink from an aching wrist
The rough-hewn ash-bow? Straight, a gold shaft hissed
Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down
Superbly! "Crosses to the breach! God's Town
Is gained him back!" Why bend rough ash-bows more?
Thus lives he: if not careless as before,

Comforted: for one may anticipate,
Rehearse the future, be prepared when fate
Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names
Startle, real places of enormous fames,
Este abroad and Ecelin at home
To worship him, — Mantua, Verona, Rome
To witness it. Who grudges time so spent?
Rather test qualities to heart's content —
Summon them, thrice selected, near and far —
Compress the starriest into one star,
And grasp the whole at once!
The pageant thinned
Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind
His spirit passed to winnow and divide;
Back fell the simpler phantasms; every side
The strong clave to the wise; with either classed
The beauteous; so, till two or three amassed
Mankind's beseemingnesses, and reduced
Themselves eventually, — graces loosed,
Strengths lavished, — all to heighten up One Shape
Whose potency no creature should escape.
Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk?
Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk,
Is some gray scorching Saracenic wine
The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline —
Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed and chapped,
Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped,
Are dates plucked from the bough John Brienne sent
To keep in mind his sluggish armament
Of Canaan: — Friedrich's, all the pomp and fierce
Demeanor! But harsh sounds and sights transpierce
So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells
Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells
On the obdurate! That right arm indeed
Has thunder for its slave; but where 's the need

Of thunder if the stricken multitude
Hearkens, arrested in its angriest mood,
While songs go up exulting, then dispread,
Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
Like an escape of angels? 'T is the tune,
Nor much unlike the words his women croon
Smilingly, colorless and faint-designed
Each, as a worn-out queen's face some remind
Of her extreme youth's love-tales. "Eglamor
Made that!" Half minstrel and half emperor,
What but ill objects vexed him? Such he slew.
The kinder sort were easy to subdue
By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones;
And these a gracious hand advanced to thrones
Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture this,
Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,
Instead of saying, neither less nor more,
He had discovered, as our world before;
Apollo? That shall be the name; nor bid
Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid
The youth — what thefts of every clime and day
Contributed to purfle the array
He climbed with (June at deep) some close ravine
Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,
Over which, singing soft, the runnel slipped
Elate with rains: into whose streamlet dipped
He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet sock —
Though really on the stubs of living rock
Ages ago it crenelled; vines for roof,
Lindens for wall; before him, aye aloof,
Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,
Born of the simmering quiet, there to die.
Emerging whence, Appollo still, he spied
Mighty descents of forest; multiplied
Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees,

There gendered the grave maple stocks at ease.
And, proud of its observer, straight the wood
Tried old surprises on him; black it stood
A sudden barrier ('t was a cloud passed o'er)
So dead and dense, the tiniest brute no more
Must pass; yet presently (the cloud dispatched)
Each clump, behold, was glistering detached
A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems!
Yet could not he denounce the stratagems
He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would hang
White summer-lightnings; as it sank and sprang
To measure, that whole palpitating breast
Of heaven, 't was Apollo, nature prest
At eve to worship.
Time stole: by degrees
The Pythons perish off; his votaries
Sink to respectful distance; songs redeem
Their pains, but briefer; their dismissals seem
Emphatic; only girls are very slow
To disappear — his Delians! Some that glow
O' the instant more with earlier loves to wrench
Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench;
Alike in one material circumstance —
All soon or late adore Apollo! Glance
The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,
His Daphne! "We secure Count Richard's voice
In Este's counsels, good for Este's ends
As our Taurello," say his faded friends,
"By granting him our Palma!" — the sole child,
They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled
Ecelin, years before this Adelaide
Wedded and turned him wicked: "but the maid
Rejects his suit," those sleepy women boast.
She, scorning all beside, deserves the most
Sordello: so, conspicuous in his world

Of dreams sat Palma. How the tresses curled
Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound
About her like a glory! even the ground
Was bright as with spilt sunbeams; breathe not, breathe
Not! — poised, see, one leg doubled underneath,
Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,
Rests, but the other, listlessly below,
O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air,
The vein-streaks swollen a richer violet where
The languid blood lies heavily; yet calm
On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm
As but suspended in the act to rise
By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes
Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets
Apollo's gaze in the pine glooms.
Time fleets:
That 's worst! Because the pre-appointed age
Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage
And crowd she promised. Lean he grows and pale,
Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail
Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet alone
He tarries here! The earnest smile is gone.
How long this might continue matters not;
— Forever, possibly; since to the spot
None come: our lingering Taurello quits
Mantua at last, and light our lady flits
Back to her place disburthened of a care.
Strange — to be constant here if he is there!
Is it distrust? Oh, never! for they both
Goad Ecelin alike, Romano's growth
Is daily manifest, with Azzo dumb
And Richard wavering; let but Friedrich come,
Find matter for the minstrelsy's report
— Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's court

To sing us a Messina morning up,
And, double rillet of a drinking cup,
Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,
Northward to Provence that, and thus far south
The other! What a method to apprise
Neighbors of births, espousals, obsequies,
Which in their very tongue the Troubadour
Records! and his performance makes a tour,
For Trouvers bear the miracle about,
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout
Until the Formidable House is famed
Over the country — as Taurello aimed,
Who introduced, although the rest adopt,
The novelty. Such games, her absence stopped,
Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse
No longer, in the light of day pursues
Her plans at Mantua: whence an accident
Which, breaking on Sordello's mixed content
Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,
The veritable business of mankind.

BOOK THE SECOND

THE woods were long austere with snow: at last
Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast
Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,
Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' the wood
Our buried year, a witch, grew young again
To placid incantations, and that stain
About were from her cauldron, green smoke blent
With those black pines" — so Eglamor gave vent
To a chance fancy. Whence a just rebuke
From his companion; brother Naddo shook
The solemnest of brows: "Beware," he said,

"Of setting up conceits in nature's stead!"
Forth wandered our Sordello. Naught so sure
As that to-day's adventure will secure
Palma, the visioned lady — only pass
O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted grass,
Under that brake where sundawn feeds the stalks
Of withered fern with gold, into those walks
Of pine and take her! Buoyantly he went.
Again his stooping forehead was besprent
With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Then wide
Opened the great morass, shot every side
With flashing water through and through; a-shine,
Thick-steaming, all-alive. Whose shape divine,
Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapor, glanced
Athwart the flying herons? He advanced,
But warily; though Mincio leaped no more,
Each foot-fall burst up in the marish-floor
A diamond jet: and if he stopped to pick
Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick,
And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or loach,
A sudden pond would silently encroach
This way and that. On Palma passed. The verge
Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge
Flushed, now, and panting, — crowds to see, —
will own
She loves him — Boniface to hear, to groan,
To leave his suit! One screen of pine-trees still
Opposes: but — the startling spectacle —
Mantua, this time! Under the walls — a crowd
Indeed, real men and women, gay and loud
Round a pavilion. How he stood!
In truth
No prophecy had come to pass: his youth
In its prime now —and where was homage poured
Upon Sordello? — born to be adored,

And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made
To cope with any, cast into the shade
By this and this. Yet something seemed to prick
And tingle in his blood; a sleight — a trick —
And much would be explained. It went for naught—
The best of their endowments were ill bought
With his identity: nay, the conceit,
That this day's roving led to Palma's feet
Was not so vain — list! The word, "Palma!" Steal
Aside, and die, Sordello; this is real,
And this — abjure!
What next? The curtains see
Dividing! She is there; and presently
He will be there — the proper You, at length —
In your own cherished dress of grace and strength:
Most like, the very Boniface!
Not so.
It was a showy man advanced; but though
A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound
Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around,
— "This is not he," Sordello felt; while, "Place
For the best Troubadour of Boniface!"
Hollaed the Jongleurs, — "Eglamor, whose lay
Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-day!"
Obsequious Naddo strung the master's lute
With the new lute-string, "Elys," named to suit
The song: he stealthily at watch, the while,
Biting his lip to keep down a great smile
Of pride: then up he struck. Sordello's brain
Swam; for he knew a sometime deed again;
So, could supply each foolish gap and chasm
The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,
Mistaking its true version — was the tale
Not of Apollo? Only, what avail
Luring her down, that Elys an he pleased,

If the man dared no further? Has he ceased
And, lo, the people's frank applause half done,
Sordello was beside him, had begun
(Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend
The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end,
Taking the other's names and time and place
For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,
After the flying story; word made leap
Out word, rhyme—rhyme; the lay could barely keep
Pace with the action visibly rushing past:
Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast
Than some Egyptian from the harassed bull
That wheeled abrupt and, bellowing, fronted full
His plague, who spied a scarab 'neath the tongue,
And found 't was Apis' flank his hasty prong
Insulted. But the people — but the cries,
The crowding round, and proffering the prize!
— For he had gained some prize. He seemed to shrink
Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink
One sight withheld him. There sat Adelaide,
Silent; but at her knees the very maid
Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich,
The same pure fleecy hair; one weft of which,
Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er
She leant, speaking some six words and no more.
He answered something, anything; and she
Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily
Upon him, her neck's warmth and all. Again
Moved the arrested magic; in his brain
Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,
And greater glare, until the intense flare
Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense.
And when he woke 't was many a furlong thence,
At home; the sun shining his ruddy wont;

The customary birds'-chirp; but his front
Was crowned — was crowned! Her scented scarf around
His neck! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps the ground?
A prize? He turned, and peeringly on him
Brooded the women-faces, kind and dim,
Ready to talk —"The Jongleurs in a troop
Had brought him back, Naddo and Squarcialupe
And Tagliafer; how strange! a childhood spent
In taking, well for him, so brave a bent!
Since Eglamor," they heard, "was dead with spite,
And Palma chose him for her minstrel."
Light
Sordello rose — to think, now; hitherto
He had perceived. Sure, a discovery grew
Out of it all! Best live from first to last
The transport o'er again. A week he passed,
Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,
From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance
Bounding his own achievement. Strange! A man
Recounted an adventure, but began
Imperfectly; his own task was to fill
The frame-work up, sing well what he sung ill,
Supply the necessary points, set loose
As many incidents of little use
— More imbecile the other, not to see
Their relative importance clear as he!
But, for a special pleasure in the act
Of singing — had he ever turned, in fact,
From Elys, to sing Elys? — from each fit
Of rapture to contrive a song of it?
True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind
Into a treasure, helped himself to find
A beauty in himself; for, see, he soared
By means of that mere snatch, to many a hoard

Of fancies; as some falling cone bears soft
The eye along the fir-tree-spire, aloft
To a dove's nest. Then, how divine the cause
Why such performance should exact applause
From men, if they had fancies too? Did fate
Decree they found a beauty separate
In the poor snatch itself? — "Take Elys, there,
— 'Her head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear,
So close and smooth are laid the few fine locks
Colored like honey oozed from topmost rocks
Sun-blanched the livelong summer' — if they heard
Just those two rhymes, assented at my word,
And loved them as I love them who have run
These fingers through those pale locks, let the sun
Into the white cool skin — who first could clutch,
Then praise — I needs must be a god to such.
Or what if some, above themselves, and yet
Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set
An impress on our gift? So, men believe
And worship what they know not, nor receive
Delight from. Have they fancies — slow, perchance,
Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance
Until, by song, each floating part be linked
To each, and all grow palpable, distinct!"
He pondered this.
Meanwhile, sounds low and drear
Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near
And nearer, while the underwood was pushed
Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed
At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid;
Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade
Came o'er the sky although 't was midday yet:
You saw each half-shut downcast floweret
Flutter — "a Roman bride, when they 'd dispart
Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,

Holding that famous rape in memory still,
Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,
And looked thus," Eglamor would say — indeed
'T is Eglamor, no other, these precede
Home hither in the woods. "'T were surely sweet
Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat
To sleep!" judged Naddo, who in person led
Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,
A scanty company; for, sooth to say,
Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day.
Old worshippers were something shamed, old friends
Nigh weary; still the death proposed amends.
"Let us but get them safely through my song
And home again!" quoth Naddo.
All along,
This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)
—This calm corpse with the loose flowers in his hand,
Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite.
For him indeed was Naddo's notion right,
And verse a temple-worship vague and vast,
A ceremony that withdrew the last
Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil
Which hid the holy place: should one so frail
Stand there without such effort? or repine
If much was blank, uncertain at the shrine
He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,
The power responded, and some sound or sight
Grew up, his own forever, to be fixed,
In rhyme, the beautiful, forever! — mixed
With his own life, unloosed when he should please,
Having it safe at hand, ready to ease
All pain, remove all trouble; every time
He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,
(Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love)
Faltering; so distinct and far above

Himself, these fancies! He, no genius rare,
Transfiguring in fire or wave or air
At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up
In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,
His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few
And their arrangement finds enough to do
For his best art. Then, how he loved that art!
The calling marking him a man apart
From men — one not to care, take counsel for
Cold hearts, comfortless faces — (Eglamor
Was neediest of his tribe) — since verse, the gift,
Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift
Without it, e'en content themselves with wealth
And pomp and power, snatching a life by stealth.
So, Eglamor was not without his pride!
The sorriest bat which cowers throughout noontide
While other birds are jocund, has one time
When moon and stars are blinded, and the prime
Of earth is his to claim, nor find a peer;
And Eglamor was noblest poet here —
He well knew, 'mid those April woods he cast
Conceits upon in plenty as he passed,
That Naddo might suppose him not to think
Entirely on the coming triumph: wink
At the one weakness! 'T was a fervid child,
That song of his; no brother of the guild
Had e'er conceived its like. The rest you know,
The exaltation and the overthrow:
Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,
His life — to that it came. Yet envy sank
Within him, as he heard Sordello out,
And, for the first time, shouted — tried to shout
Like others, not from any zeal to show
Pleasure that way: the common sort did so,
What else was Eglamor? who, bending down

As they, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,
Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,
Left one great tear on it, then joined his band
— In time; for some were watching at the door:
Who knows what envy may effect? "Give o'er,
Nor charm his lips, nor craze him!" (here one spied
And disengaged the withered crown) — "Beside
His crown? How prompt and clear those verses rang
To answer yours! nay, sing them!" And he sang
Them calmly. Home he went; friends used to wait
His coming, zealous to congratulate;
But, to a man — so quickly runs report —
Could do no less than leave him, and escort
His rival. That eve, then, bred many a thought:
What must his future life be? was he brought
So low, who stood so lofty this Spring morn?
At length he said, "Best sleep now with my scorn,
And by to-morrow I devise some plain
Expedient!" So, he slept, nor woke again.
They found as much, those friends, when they returned
O'erflowing with the marvels they had learned
About Sordello's paradise, his roves
Among the hills and vales and plains and groves,
Wherein, no doubt, this lay was roughly cast,
Polished by slow degrees, completed last
To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.
 Such form the chanters now, and, out of breath,
They lay the beaten man in his abode,
Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,
Doleful to hear. Sordello could explore
By means of it, however, one step more
In joy; and, mastering the round at length,
Learnt how to live in weakness as in strength,
When from his covert forth he stood, addressed

Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,
Primeval pines o'er canopy his couch,
And, most of all, his fame — (shall I avouch
Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look,
And laughed as from his brow Sordello took
The crown, and laid on the bard's breast, and said
It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head?)
— Continue. Nor the prayer quite fruitless fell,
A plant they have, yielding a three-leaved bell
Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails
Till evening; evening gives it to her gales
To clear away with such forgotten things
As are an eyesore to the morn: this brings
Him to their mind, and bears his very name.
So much for Eglamor. My own month came;
'T was a sunrise of blossoming and May.
Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay
Sordello; each new sprinkle of white stars
That smell fainter of wine than Massic jars
Dug up at Baiæ, when the south wind shed
The ripest, made him happier; filleted
And robed the same, only a lute beside
Lay on the turf. Before him far and wide
The country stretched: Goito slept behind
— The castle and its covert, which confined
Him with his hopes and fears; so fain of old
To leave the story of his birth untold.
At intervals, 'spite the fantastic glow
Of his Apollo-life, a certain low
And wretched whisper, winding through the bliss,
Admonished, no such fortune could be his,
All was quite false and sure to fade one day:
The closelier drew he round him his array
Of brilliance to expel the truth. But when
A reason for his difference from men

Sordello's Tribute

(Drawing by Evelyn Paul)

"Shall I avouch
Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look
And laughed as from his brow Sordello took
The crown, and laid on the bard's breast, and said
'It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head?'"

—Sordello.

Surprised him at the grave, he took no rest
While aught of that old life, superbly dressed
Down to its meanest incident, remained
A mystery: alas, they soon explained
Away Apollo! and the tale amounts
To this: when at Vicenza both her counts
Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,
Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,
Reviled him as he followed; he for spite
Must fire their quarter, though that self-same night
Among the flames young Ecelin was born
Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn
From the roused populace hard on the rear,
By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear
Grew high; into the thick Elcorte leapt,
Saved her, and died; no creature left except
His child to thank. And when the full escape
Was known — how men impaled from chine to nape
Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned
Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned
Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,
Missing the sweeter prey — such courage well
Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,
Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince
Within a blind retreat where Adelaide —
(For, once this notable discovery made,
The past at every point was understood)
— Might harbor easily when times were rude,
When Azzo schemed for Palma, to retrieve
That pledge of Agnes Este — loth to leave
Mantua unguarded with a vigilant eye,
While there Taurello bode ambiguously —
He who could have no motive now to moil
For his own fortunes since their utter spoil —
As it were worth while yet (went the report)

To disengage himself from her. In short,
Apollo vanished; a mean youth, just named
His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed
— How shall I phrase it? — Monarch of the World!
For, on the day when that array was furled
Forever, and in place of one a slave
To longings, wild indeed, but longings save
In dreams as wild, suppressed — one daring not
Assume the mastery such dreams allot,
Until a magical equipment, strength,
Grace, wisdom, decked him too, — he chose at length,
Content with unproved wits and failing frame,
In virtue of his simple will, to claim
That mastery, no less — to do his best
With means so limited, and let the rest
Go by, — the seal was set: never again
Sordello could in his own sight remain
One of the many, one with hopes and cares
And interests nowise distinct from theirs,
Only peculiar in a thriveless store
Of fancies, which were fancies and no more;
Never again for him and for the crowd
A common law was challenged and allowed
If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied
By a mad impulse nothing justified
Short of Apollo's presence. The divorce
Is clear: why needs Sordello square his course
By any known example? Men no more
Compete with him than tree and flower before.
Himself, inactive, yet is greater far
Than such as act, each stooping to his star,
Acquiring thence his function; he has gained
The same result with meaner mortals trained
To strength or beauty, moulded to express
Each the idea that rules him; since no less

He comprehends that function, but can still
Embrace the others, take of might his fill
With Richard as of grace with Palma, mix
Their qualities, or for a moment fix
On one; abiding free meantime, uncramped
By any partial organ, never stamped
Strong, and to strength turning all energies —
Wise, and restricted to becoming wise —
That is, he loves not, nor possesses One
Idea that, star-like over, lures him on
To its exclusive purpose. "Fortunate!
This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate
A soul so various — took no casual mould
Of the first fancy and, contracted, cold,
Clogged her forever — soul averse to change
As flesh: whereas flesh leaves soul free to range,
Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,
Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.
So, range, free soul! — who, by self-consciousness,
The last drop of all beauty dost express —
The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence
For thee: while for the world, that can dispense
Wonder on men who, themselves, wonder — make
A shift to love at second-hand, and take
For idols those who do but idolize,
Themselves, — the world that counts men strong or wise,
Who, themselves, court strength, wisdom, — it shall bow
Surely in unexampled worship now,
Discerning me!" —
(Dear monarch, I beseech,
Notice how lamentably wide a breach
Is here: discovering this, discover too
What our poor world has possibly to do

With it! As pigmy natures as you please —
So much the better for you; take your ease,
Look on, and laugh; style yourself God alone;
Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone!
All that is right enough: but why want us
To know that you yourself know thus and thus?)
"The world shall bow to me conceiving all
Man's life, who see its blisses, great and small,
Afar — not tasting any; no machine
To exercise my utmost will is mine:
Be mine mere consciousness! Let men perceive
What I could do, a mastery believe,
Asserted and established to the throng
By their selected evidence of song
Which now shall prove, whate'er they are, or seek
To be, I am — whose words, not actions speak,
Who change no standards of perfection, vex
With no strange forms created to perplex,
But just perform their bidding and no more,
At their own satiating-point give o'er,
While each shall love in me the love that leads
His soul to power's perfection." Song, not deeds,
(For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would brook
Mankind no other organ; he would look
For not another channel to dispense
His own volition by, receive men's sense
Of its supremacy — would live content,
Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent.
Nor should, for instance, strength an outlet seek
And, striving, be admired: nor grace bespeak
Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes:
Nor wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly moods;
But he would give and take on song's one point.
Like some huge throbbing stone that, poised a-joint,
Sounds, to affect on its basaltic bed,

Must sue in just one accent; tempests shed
Thunder, and raves the windstorm: only let
That key by any little noise be set —
The far benighted hunter's halloo pitch
On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch
Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,
However loud, however low — all lift
The groaning monster, stricken to the heart.
 Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its part,
And this, for his, will hardly interfere!
Its businesses in blood and blaze this year
But wile the hour away — a pastime slight
Till he shall step upon the platform: right!
And, now thus much is settled, cast in rough,
Proved feasible, be counselled! thought enough, —
Slumber, Sordello! any day will serve:
Were it a less digested plan! how swerve
To-morrow? Meanwhile eat these sun-dried grapes,
And watch the soaring hawk there! Life escapes
Merrily thus.
 He thoroughly read o'er
His truchman Naddo's missive six times more,
Praying him visit Mantua and supply
A famished world.
 The evening star was high
When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived
Before him: friends applauded, foes connived,
And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest
Angels, and all these angels would be blest
Supremely by a song — the thrice-renowned
Goito-manufacture. Then he found
(Casting about to satisfy the crowd)
That happy vehicle, so late allowed,
A sore annoyance; 't was the song's effect
He cared for, scarce the song itself: reflect!

In the past life, what might be singing's use?
Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse
Praise, not the toilsome process which procured
That praise, enticed Apollo: dreams abjured,
No overleaping means for ends — take both
For granted or take neither! I am loth
To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's;
But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors
Go pine; "the master certes meant to waste
No effort, cautiously had probed the taste
He 'd please anon: true bard, in short, — disturb
His title if they could; nor spur nor curb,
Fancy nor reason, wanting in him; whence
The staple of his verses, common sense:
He built on man's broad nature — gift of gifts,
That power to build! The world contented shifts
With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort
Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort
Its poet-soul — that 's, after all, a freak
(The having eyes to see and tongue to speak)
With our herd's stupid sterling happiness
So plainly incompatible that — yes —
Yes — should a son of his improve the breed
And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed!"
"Well, there 's Goito and its woods anon,
If the worst happen; best go stoutly on
Now!" thought Sordello.
Ay, and goes on yet!
You pother with your glossaries to get
A notion of the Troubadour's intent
In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent —
Much as you study arras how to twirl
His angelot, plaything of page and girl
Once; but you surely reach, at last, — or, no!
Never quite reach what struck the people so,

As from the welter of their time he drew
Its elements successively to view,
Followed all actions backward on their course,
And catching up, unmingled at the source,
Such a strength, such a weakness, added then
A touch or two, and turned them into men.
Virtue took form, nor vice refused a shape;
Here heaven opened, there was hell agape,
As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,
Sinner the other flared portentous by
A greedy people. Then why stop, surprised
At his success? The scheme was realized
Too suddenly in one respect: a crowd
Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud
To speak, delicious homage to receive,
The woman's breath to feel upon his sleeve,
Who said, "But Anafest — why asks he less
Than Lucio, in your verses? how confess,
It seemed too much but yestereve!" — the youth,
Who bade him earnestly, "Avow the truth!
You love Bianca, surely, from your song;
I knew I was unworthy!" — soft or strong,
In poured such tributes ere he had arranged
Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed,
Digested. Courted thus at unawares,
In spite of his pretentions and his cares,
He caught himself shamefully hankering
After the obvious petty joys that spring
From true life, fain relinquish pedestal
And condescend with pleasures — one and all
To be renounced, no doubt; for, thus to chain
Himself to single joys and so refrain
From tasting their quintessence, frustrates, sure,
His prime design; each joy must he abjure
Even for love of it.

He laughed: what sage
But perishes if from his magic page
He look because, at the first line, a proof
'T was heard salutes him from the cavern roof?
"On! Give yourself, excluding aught beside,
To the day's task; compel your slave provide
Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf
Thoroughly conned. These lays of yours, in brief —
Cannot men bear, now, something better? — fly
A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry
Of essences? the period sure has ceased
For such: present us with ourselves, at least,
Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and hates
Made flesh: wait not!"
Awhile the poet waits
However. The first trial was enough:
He left imagining, to try the stuff
That held the imaged thing, and, let it writhe
Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe
To reach the light — his Language. How he sought
The cause, conceived a cure, and slow rewrought
That Language, — welding words into the crude
Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude
Armor was hammered out, in time to be
Approved beyond the Roman panoply
Melted to make it, — boots not. This obtained
With some ado, no obstacle remained
To using it; accordingly he took
An action with its actors, quite forsook
Himself to live in each, returned anon
With the result — a creature, and, by one
And one, proceeded leisurely to equip
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.
"Accomplished! Listen, Mantuans!" Fond essay!
Piece after piece that armor broke away,

Because perceptions whole, like that he sought
To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought
As language: thought may take perception's place
But hardly co-exist in any case,
Being its mere presentment — of the whole
By parts, the simultaneous and the sole
By the successive and the many. Lacks
The crowd perception? painfully it tacks
Thought to thought, which Sordello, needing such,
Has rent perception into: it 's to clutch
And reconstruct — his office to diffuse,
Destroy: as hard, then, to obtain a Muse
As to become Apollo. "For the rest,
E'en if some wondrous vehicle expressed
The whole dream, what impertinence in me
So to express it, who myself can be
The dream! nor, on the other hand, are those
I sing to, over-likely to suppose
A higher than the highest I present
Now, which they praise already: be content
Both parties, rather — they with the old verse,
And I with the old praise — far go, fare worse!"
A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings
The angel, sparkles off his mail, which rings
Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps;
So might Apollo from the sudden corpse
Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits.
He set to celebrating the exploits
Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.
Then came
The world's revenge: their pleasure, now his aim
Merely, — what was it? "Not to play the fool
So much as learn our lesson in your school!"
Replied the world. He found that, every time
He gained applause by any ballad-rhyme,

His auditory recognized no jot
As he intended, and, mistaking not
Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was dunce
Sufficient to believe him — all, at once.
His will . . . conceive it caring for his will!
— Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still
How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,
Had Montfort at completely (so to speak)
His fingers' ends; while past the praise-tide swept
To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept:
The true meed for true merit! — his abates
Into a sort he most repudiates,
And on them angrily he turns. Who were
The Mantuans, after all, that he should care
About their recognition, ay or no?
In spite of the convention months ago,
(Why blink the truth?) was not he forced to help
This same ungrateful audience, every whelp
Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers
With the bright band of old Goito years,
As erst he toiled for flower or tree? Why, there
Sat Palma! Adelaide's funereal hair
Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed
A fairy dust upon that multitude,
Although he feigned to take them by themselves;
His giants dignified those puny elves,
Sublimed their faint applause. In short, he found
Himself still footing a delusive round,
Remote as ever from the self-display
He meant to compass, hampered every way
By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then
Continue, make believe to find in men
A use he found not?
Weeks, months, years went by,
And lo, Sordello vanished utterly,

Sundered in twain; each spectral part at strife
With each; one jarred against another life;
The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man —
Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran
Here, there: let slip no opportunities
As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize
To drop on him some no-time and acquit
His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit —
That waiving any compromise between
No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen
Beyond most methods) — of incurring scoff
From the Man-portion — not to be put off
With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme,
Though ne'er so bright. Who sauntered forth in dream,
Dressed anyhow, nor waited mystic frames,
Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,
But just his sorry self? — who yet might be
Sorrier for aught he in reality
Achieved, so pinioned Man's the Poet-part,
Fondling, in turn of fancy, verse; the Art
Developing his soul a thousand ways —
Potent, by its assistance, to amaze
The multitude with majesties, convince
Each sort of nature that the nature's prince
Accosted it. Language, the makeshift, grew
Into a bravest of expedients, too;
Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown
Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone
Sufficed. While, out of dream, his day's work went
To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent —
So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge
Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge
A minute's toil that missed its due reward!
But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard,

John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,
That on the sea, with, open in his hand,
A bitter-sweetling of a book — was gone.
 Then, if internal struggles to be one,
Which frittered him incessantly piecemeal,
Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real
Intruding Mantuans! ever with some call
To action while he pondered, once for all,
Which looked the easier effort — to pursue
This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn through
The present ill-appreciated stage
Of self-revealment, and compel the age
Know him — or else, forswearing bard-craft, wake
From out his lethargy and nobly shake
Off timid habits of denial, mix
With men, enjoy like men. Ere he could fix
On aught, in rushed the Mantuans; much they cared
For his perplexity! Thus unprepared,
The obvious if not only shelter lay
In deeds, the dull conventions of his day
Prescribed the like of him: why not be glad
'T is settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad,
Submits to this and that established rule?
Let Vidal change, or any other fool,
His murrey-colored robe for filamot,
And crop his hair; too skin-deep, is it not,
Such vigor? Then, a sorrow to the heart,
His talk! Whatever topics they might start
Had to be groped for in his consciousness
Straight, and as straight delivered them by guess.
Only obliged to ask himself, "What was,"
A speedy answer followed; but, alas,
One of God's large ones, tardy to condense
Itself into a period; answers whence
A tangle of conclusions must be stripped

At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipped,
They matched rare specimens the Mantuan flock
Regaled him with, each talker from his stock
Of sorted o'er opinions, every stage,
Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,
Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe, rotten-rich,
Sweet-sour, all tastes to take: a practice which
He too had not impossibly attained,
Once either of those fancy-flights restrained;
(For, at conjecture how might words appear
To others, playing there what happened here,
And occupied abroad by what he spurned
At home, 't was slipped, the occasion he returned
To seize:) he 'd strike that lyre adroitly — speech,
Would but a twenty-cubit plectre reach;
A clever hand, consummate instrument,
Were both brought close; each excellency went
For nothing, else. The question Naddo asked,
Had just a lifetime moderately tasked
To answer, Naddo's fashion. More disgust
And more: why move his soul, since move it must
At minute's notice or as good it failed
To move at all? The end was, he retailed
Some ready-made opinion, put to use
This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce
Gestures and tones — at any folly caught
Serving to finish with, nor too much sought
If false or true 't was spoken; praise and blame
Of what he said grew pretty nigh the same
— Meantime awards to meantime acts: his soul,
Unequal to the compassing a whole,
Saw, in a tenth part, less and less to strive
About. And as for men in turn . . . contrive
Who could to take eternal interest
In them, so hate the worst, so love the best!

Though, in pursuance of his passive plan,
He hailed, decried, the proper way.
As Man
So figured he; and how as Poet? Verse
Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,
That his poor piece of daily work to do
Was — not sink under any rivals; who
Loudly and long enough, without these qualms,
Turned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked psalms,
To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,
"As knops that stud some almug to the pith
Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and crinklèd worse
Than pursèd eyelids of a river-horse
Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the breese" —
Gad-fly, that is. He might compete with these!
But — but —
"Observe a pompion twine afloat;
Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat!
Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root,
The entire surface of the pool to boot.
So could I pluck a cup, put in one song
A single sight, did not my hand, too strong,
Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.
How should externals satisfy my soul?"
"Why, that 's precise the error Squarcialupe"
(Hazarded Naddo) "finds; 'the man can't stoop
To sing us out,' quoth he, 'a mere romance;
He 'd fain do better than the best, enhance
The subjects' rarity, work problems out
Therewith.' Now, you 're a bard, a bard past doubt,
And no philosopher; why introduce
Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but no use
In poetry — which still must be, to strike,
Based upon common sense; there 's nothing like

Appealing to our nature! what beside
Was your first poetry? No tricks were tried
In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes!
'The man,' said we, 'tells his own joys and woes:
We 'll trust him.' Would you have your songs endure?
Build on the human heart! — why, to be sure
Yours is one sort of heart — but I mean theirs,
Ours, every one's, the healthy heart one cares
To build on! Central peace, mother of strength,
That 's father of . . . nay, go yourself that length,
Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do
When they have got their calm! And is it true,
Fire rankles at the heart of every globe?
Perhaps. But these are matters one may probe
Too deeply for poetic purposes:
Rather select a theory that . . . yes,
Laugh! what does that prove? — stations you midway
And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay,
That 's rank injustice done me! I restrict
The poet? Don't I hold the poet picked
Out of a host of warriors, statesmen . . . did
I tell you? Very like! As well you hid
That sense of power, you have! True bards believe
All able to achieve what they achieve —
That is, just nothing — in one point abide
Profounder simpletons than all beside.
Oh, ay! The knowledge that you are a bard
Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward!"
So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe
Of genius-haunters — how shall I describe
What grubs or nips or rubs or rips — your louse
For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,
Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer,

Picking a sustenance from wear and tear
By implements it sedulous employs
To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-toise
Sordello? Fifty creepers to elude
At once! They settled stanchly; shame ensued:
Behold the monarch of mankind succumb
To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,
As Naddo styled it! 'T was not worth oppose
The matter of a moment, gainsay those
He aimed at getting rid of; better think
Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to slink
Back expeditiously to his safe place,
And chew the cud — what he and what his race
Were really, each of them. Yet even this
Conformity was partial. He would miss
Some point, brought into contact with them ere
Assured in what small segment of the sphere
Of his existence they attended him;
Whence blunders, falsehoods rectified — a grim
List — slur it over! How? If dreams were tried,
His will swayed sicklily from side to side,
Nor merely neutralized his waking act
But tended e'en in fancy to distract
The intermediate will, the choice of means.
He lost the art of dreaming: Mantuan scenes
Supplied a baron, say, he sang before,
Handsomely reckless, full to running-o'er
Of gallantries; "abjure the soul, content
With body, therefore!" Scarcely had he bent
Himself in dream thus low, when matter fast
Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast
And task it duly; by advances slight,
The simple stuff becoming composite,
Count Lori grew Apollo: best recall

His fancy! Then would some rough peasant-Paul,
Like those old Ecelin confers with, glance
His gay apparel o'er; that countenance
Gathered his shattered fancies into one,
And, body clean abolished, soul alone
Sufficed the gray Paulician; by and by,
To balance the ethereality,
Passions were needed; foiled he sank again.
Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('t is time explain)
Because a sudden sickness set it free
From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee,
Her mountain-hive Romano swarmed; at once
A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons
Blackened the valley. "I am sick too, old,
Half-crazed I think; what good 's the Kaiser's gold
To such an one? God help me! for I catch
My children's greedy sparkling eyes at watch —
'He bears that double breastplate on,' they say,
'So many minutes less than yesterday!'
Beside, Monk Hilary is on his knees
Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please
Exact a punishment for many things
You know, and some you never knew; which brings
To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix
And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's
And Ecelin's betrothed; the Count himself
Must get my Palma: Ghibellin and Guelf
Mean to embrace each other." So began
Romano's missive to his fighting man
Taurello — on the Tuscan's death, away
With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay
Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap
Out of Vesuvius' throat, like this mishap
Startled him. "That accursed Vicenza! I
Absent, and she selects this time to die!

Ho, fellows, for Vicenza!" Half a score
Of horses ridden dead, he stood before
Romano in his reeking spurs: too late —
"Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,"
The chieftain stammered; "let me die in peace —
Forget me! Was it I who craved increase
Of rule? Do you and Friedrich plot your worst
Against the Father: as you found me first
So leave me now. Forgive me! Palma, sure,
Is at Goito still. Retain that lure —
Only be pacified!"
The country rung
With such a piece of news: on every tongue,
How Ecelin's great servant, congeed off,
Had done a long day's service, so, might doff
The green and yellow, and recover breath
At Mantua, whither, — since Retrude's death,
(The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride
From Otho's house, he carried to reside
At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile
A structure worthy her imperial style,
The gardens raise, the statues there enshrine,
She never lived to see) — althought his line
Was ancient in her archives and she took
A pride in him, that city, nor forsook
Her child when he forsook himself and spent
A prowess on Romano surely meant
For his own growth — whither he ne'er resorts
If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)
With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice
Were shows to greet him. "Take a friend's advice,"
Quoth Naddo to Sordello, "nor be rash
Because your rivals (nothing can abash
Some folks) demur that we pronounced you best
To sound the great man's welcome; 't is a test,

Remember! Strojavacca looks asquint,
The rough fat sloven; and there 's plenty hint
Your pinions have received of late a shock —
Outsoar them, cobswan of the silver flock!
Sing well!" A signal wonder, song 's no whit
Facilitated.
Fast the minutes flit;
Another day, Sordello finds, will bring
The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing;
So, a last shift, quits Mantua — slow, alone:
Out of that aching brain, a very stone,
Song must be struck. What occupies that front?
Just how he was more awkward than his wont
The night before, when Naddo, who had seen
Taurello on his progress, praised the mien
For dignity no crosses could affect —
Such was a joy, and might not he detect
A satisfaction if established joys
Were proved imposture? Poetry annoys
Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses may come
Or keep away! And thus he wandered, dumb
Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent,
On a blind hill-top: down the gorge he went,
Yielding himself up as to an embrace.
The moon came out; like features of a face,
A querulous fraternity of pines,
Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling vines
Also came out, made gradually up
The picture; 't was Goito's mountain-cup
And castle. He had dropped through one defile
He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile
Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, enwrapped
Him wholly. 'T was Apollo now they lapped,
Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant

To wear his soul away in discontent,
Brooding on fortune's malice. Heart and brain
Swelled; he expanded to himself again,
As some thin seedling spice-tree starved and frail,
Pushing between cat's head and ibis' tail
Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth,
— Suffered remain just as it sprung, to soothe
The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet
Well in her chilly green-glazed minaret, —
When rooted up, the sunny day she died,
And flung into the common court beside
Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello! Soon
Was he low muttering, beneath the moon,
Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore, —
Since from the purpose, he maintained before,
Only resulted wailing and hot tears.
Ah, the slim castle! dwindled of late years,
But more mysterious; gone to ruin — trails
Of vine through every loop-hole. Naught avails
The night as, torch in hand, he must explore
The maple chamber: did I say, its floor
Was made of intersecting cedar beams?
Worn now with gaps so large, there blew cold streams
Of air quite from the dungeon; lay your ear
Close and 't is like, one after one, you hear
In the blind darkness water drop. The nests
And nooks retain their long ranged vesture-chests
Empty and smelling of the iris root
The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit
Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day,
Said the remaining women. Last, he lay
Beside the Carian group reserved and still.
The Body, the Machine for Acting Will,
Had been at the commencement proved unfit;

That for Demonstrating, Reflecting it,
Mankind — no fitter: was the Will Itself
In fault?
His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf
Beside the youngest marble maid awhile;
Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile,
"I shall be king again!" as he withdrew
The envied scarf; into the font he threw
His crown.
Next day, no poet! "Wherefore?" asked
Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs, masked
As devils, ended; "don't a song come next?"
The master of the pageant looked perplexed
Till Maddo's whisper came to his relief.
"His Highness knew what poets were: in brief,
Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right
To peevishness, caprice? or, call it spite,
One must receive their nature in its length
And breadth, expect the weakness with the strength!"
— So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,
The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,
Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin,
And nodded that the bull-bait might begin.

BOOK THE THIRD

And the font took them: let our laurels lie!
Braid moon fern now with mystic trifoly
Because once more Goito gets, once more,
Sordello to itself! A dream is o'er,
And the suspended life begins anew;
Quiet those throbbing temples, then, subdue
That cheek's distortion! Nature's strict embrace,

Putting aside the past, shall soon efface
Its print as well — factitious humors grown
Over the true — loves, hatreds not his own —
And turn him pure as some forgotten vest
Woven of painted byssus, silkiest
Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip,
Left welter where a trireme let it slip
I' the sea, and vexed a satrap; so the stain
O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its pain,
Its pleasure: how the tinct loosening escapes,
Cloud after cloud! Mantua's familiar shapes
Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit,
Men, women, and the pathos and the wit,
Wise speech, and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh
For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die.
The last face glances through the eglantines,
The last voice murmurs, 'twixt the blossomed vines,
Of Men, of that machine supplied by thought
To compass self-perception with, he sought
By forcing half himself — an insane pulse
Of a god's blood, on clay it could convulse,
Never transmute — on human sights and sounds,
To watch the other half with; irksome bounds
It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed
Forever. Better sure be unrevealed
Than part revealed: Sordello well or ill
Is finished: then what further use of Will,
Point in the prime idea not realized,
An oversight? inordinately prized,
No less, and pampered with enough of each
Delight to prove the whole above its reach.
"To need become all natures, yet retain
The law of my own nature — to remain
Myself, yet yearn . . . as if that chestnut, think,
Should yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp and pink,

Or those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs stanch
March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch!
Will and the means to show will, great and small,
Material, spiritual, — abjure them all
Save any so distinct, they may be left
To amuse, not tempt become! and, thus bereft,
Just as I first was fashioned would I be!
Nor, moon, is it Apollo now, but me
Thou visitest to comfort and befriend!
Swim thou into my heart, and there an end,
Since I possess thee! — nay, thus shut mine eyes
And know, quite know, by this heart's fall and rise,
When thou dost bury thee in clouds, and when
Out-standest: wherefore practise upon men
To make that plainer to myself?"
Slide here
Over a sweet and solitary year
Wasted; or simply notice change in him —
How eyes, once with exploring bright, grew dim
And satiate with receiving. Some distress
Was caused, too, by a sort of consciousness
Under the imbecility, — naught kept
That down; he slept, but was aware he slept,
So, frustrated: as who brainsick made pact
Erst with the overhanging cataract
To deafen him, yet still distinguished plain
His own blood's measured clicking at his brain.
To finish. One declining Autumn day —
Few birds about the heaven chill and gray,
No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods —
He sauntered home complacently, their moods
According, his and nature's. Every spark
Of Mantua life was trodden out; so dark
The embers, that the Troubadour, who sung
Hundreds of songs, forgot, its trick his tongue,

Its craft his brain, how either brought to pass
Singing at all; that faculty might class
With any of Apollo's now. The year
Began to find its early promise sere
As well. Thus beauty vanishes; thus stone
Outlingers flesh: nature's and his youth gone,
They left the world to you, and wished you joy
When, stopping his benevolent employ,
A presage shuddered through the welkin; harsh
The earth's remonstrance followed. 'T was the marsh
Gone of a sudden. Mincio, in its place,
Laughed, a broad water, in next morning's face,
And, where the mists broke up immense and white
I' the steady wind, burned like a spilth of light
Out of the crashing of a myriad stars
And here was nature, bound by the same bars
Of fate with him!
"No! youth once gone is gone:
Deeds, let escape, are never to be done.
Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year; for us —
Oh forfeit I unalterably thus
My chance? nor two lives wait me, this to spend,
Learning save that? Nature has time, may mend
Mistake, she knows occasion will recur;
Landslip or seabreach, how affects it her
With her magnificent resources? — I
Must perish once and perish utterly.
Not any strollings now at even-close
Down the field-path, Sordello! by thorn-rows
Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire
And dew, outlining the black cypress' spire
She waits you at, Elys, who heard you first
Woo her, the snow-month through, but ere she durst
Answer 't was April. Linden-flower-time-long

Her eyes were on the ground; 't is July, strong
Now; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm
The woodside, here or by the village elm
That holds the moon, she meets you, somewhat pale,
But letting you lift up her coarse flax veil
And whisper (the damp little hand in yours)
Of love, heart's love, your heart's love that endures
Till death. Tush! No mad mixing with the rout
Of haggard ribalds wandering about
The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house
Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse,
Parading, — to the gay Palermitans,
Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans
Nuocera holds, — those tall grave dazzling Norse,
High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the morse,
Queens of the caves of jet stalactites,
He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,
The blind night seas without a saving star,
And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,
Sordello! — here, mollitious alcoves gilt
Superb as Byzant domes that devils built!
— Ah, Byzant, there again! no chance to go
Ever like august cheery Dandolo,
Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,
Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all,
Through vanquished Byzant where friends note for him
What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim,
'T were fittest he transport to Venice' Square —
Flattered and promised life to touch them there
Soon, by those fervid sons of senators!
No more lifes, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces, wars!
Ah, fragments of a whole ordained to be,
Points in the life I waited! what are ye

But roundels of a ladder which appeared
Awhile the very platform it was reared
To lift me on? — that happiness I find
Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind
Instinct which bade forego you all unless
Ye led me past yourselves. Ay, happiness
Awaited me; the way life should be used
Was to acquire, and deeds like you conduced
To teach it by a self-revealment, deemed
Life's very use, so long! Whatever seemed
Progress to that, was pleasure; aught that stayed
My reaching it — no pleasure. I have laid
The ladder down; I climb not; still, aloft
The platform stretches! Blisses strong and soft,
I dared not entertain, elude me; yet
Never of what they promised could I get
A glimpse till now! The common sort, the crowd,
Exist, perceive; with Being are endowed,
However slight, distinct from what they See,
However bounded; Happiness must be,
To feed the first by gleanings from the last,
Attain its qualities, and slow or fast
Become what they behold; such peace-in-strife,
By transmutation, is the Use of Life,
The Alien turning Native to the soul
Or body — which instructs me; I am whole
There and demand a Palma; had the world
Been from my soul to a like distance hurled,
'T were Happiness to make it one with me:
Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,
Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend
In spirit now; and this done, what 's to blend
With? Naught is Alien in the world — my Will
Owns all already; yet can turn it — still
Less — Native, since my Means to correspond

With Will are so unworthy, 't was my bond
To tread the very joys that tantalize
Most now, into a grave, never to rise.
I die then! Will the rest agree to die?
Next Age or no? Shall its Sordello try
Clue after clue, and catch at last the clue
I miss? — that 's underneath my finger too,
Twice, thrice a day, perhaps, — some yearning traced
Deeper, some petty consequence embraced
Closer! Why fled I Mantua, then? — complained
So much my Will was fettered, yet remained
Content within a tether half the range
I could assign it? — able to exchange
My ignorance (I felt) for knowledge, and
Idle because I could thus understand —
Could e'en have penetrated to its core
Our mortal mystery, yet — fool — forbore,
Preferred elaborating in the dark
My casual stuff, by any wretched spark
Born of my predecessors, though one stroke
Of mine had brought the flame forth! Mantua's yoke,
My minstrel's-trade, was to behold mankind, —
My own concern was just to bring my mind
Behold, just extricate, for my acquist,
Each object suffered stifle in the mist
Which hazard, custom, blindness interpose
Betwixt things and myself."
Whereat he rose.
The level wind carried above the firs
Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,
Onward
"Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,
Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops
Under a humid finger; while there fleets,

Outside the screen, a pageant time repeats
Never again! To be deposed, immured
Clandestinely — still petted, still assured
To govern were fatiguing work — the Sight
Fleeting meanwhile! 'T is noontide: wreak ere night
Somehow my will upon it, rather! Slake
This thirst somehow, the poorest impress take
That serves! A blasted bud displays you, torn,
Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn;
But who divines what glory coats o'erclasp
Of the bulb dormant in the mummy's grasp
Taurello sent?" . . .
"Taurello? Palma sent
Your Trouvere," (Naddo interposing leant
Over the lost bard's shoulder) — "and, believe,
You cannot more reluctantly receive
Than I pronounce her message: we depart
Together. What avail a poet's heart
Verona's pomps and gauds? five blades of grass
Suffice him. News? Why, where your marish was,
On its mud-banks smoke rises after smoke
I' the valley, like a spout of hell new-broke.
Oh, the world's tidings! small your thanks, I guess,
For them. The father of our Patroness,
Has played Taurello an astounding trick,
Parts between Ecelin and Alberic
His wealth and goes into a convent: both
Wed Guelfs: the Count and Palma plighted troth
A week since at Verona: and they want
You doubtless to contrive the marriage-chant
Ere Richard storms Ferrara." Then was told
The tale from the beginning — how, made bold
By Salinguerra's absence, Guelfs had burned
And pillaged till he unawares returned
To take revenge: how Azzo and his friend

Were doing their endeavor, how the end
O' the siege was nigh, and how the Count, released
From further care, would with his marriage-feast
Inaugurate a new and better rule,
Absorbing thus Romano.
"Shall I school
My master," added Naddo, "and suggest
How you may clothe in a poetic vest
These doings, at Verona? Your response
To Palma! Wherefore jest? 'Depart at once?'
A good resolve! In truth, I hardly hoped
So prompt an acquiescence. Have you groped
Out wisdom in the wilds here? — thoughts may be
Over-poetical for poetry.
Pearl-white, you poets liken Palma's neck;
And yet what spoils an orient like some speck
Of genuine white, turning its own white gray?
You take me? Curse the cicala!"
One more day,
One eve — appears Verona! Many a group,
(You mind) instructed of the osprey's swoop
On lynx and ounce, was gathering — Christendom
Sure to receive, whate'er the end was, from
The evening's purpose cheer or detriment,
Since Friedrich only waited some event
Like this, of Ghibellins establishing
Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King
Of Lombardy, he 'd glad descend there, wage
Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage
His barons from the burghers, and restore
The rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore
By Hildebrand.
I' the palace, each by each,
Sordello sat and Palma: little speech
At first in that dim closet, face with face

(Despite the tumult in the market-place)
Exchanging quick low laughters: now would rush
Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,
A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise —
But for the most part their two histories
Ran best thro' the locked fingers and linked arms.
And so the night flew on with its alarms
Till in burst one of Palma's retinue;
"Now, Lady!" gasped he. Then arose the two
And leaned into Verona's air, dead-still.
A balcony lay black beneath until
Out, 'mid a gush of torchfire, gray-haired men
Came on it and harangued the people: then
Sea-like that people surging to and fro
Shouted, "Hale forth the carroch — trumpets, ho,
A flourish! Run it in the ancient grooves!
Back from the bell! Hammer — that whom behoves
May hear the League is up! Peal — learn who list,
Verona means not first of towns break tryst
To-morrow with the League!"
Enough. Now turn —
Over the eastern cypresses: discern!
Is any beacon set a-glimmer?
Rang
The air with shouts that overpowered the clang
Of the incessant carroch, even: "Haste —
The candle 's at the gateway! ere it waste,
Each soldier stand beside it, armed to march
With Tiso Sampier through the eastern arch!"
Ferrara's succored, Palma!
Once again
They sat together; some strange thing in train
To say, so difficult was Palma's place
In taking, with a coy fastidious grace
Like the bird's flutter ere it fix and feed.

But when she felt she held her friend indeed
Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant
Her lessons; telling of another want
Goito's quiet nourished than his own;
Palma — to serve him — to be served, alone
Importing; Agnes' milk so neutralized
The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised
If, while Sordello fain had captive led
Nature, in dream was Palma subjected
To some out-soul, which dawned not though she pined
Delaying, till its advent, heart and mind
Their life. "How dared I let expand the force
Within me, till some out-soul, whose resource
It grew for, should direct it? Every law
Of life, its every fitness, every flaw,
Must One determine whose corporeal shape
Would be no other than the prime escape
And revelation to me of a Will
Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable
Above, save at the point which, I should know,
Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow
So far, so much; as now it signified
Which earthly shape it henceforth chose my guide,
Whose mortal lip selected to declare
Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear
— The first of intimations, whom to love;
The next, how love him. Seemed that orb, above
The castle-covert and the mountain-close,
Slow in appearing? — if beneath it rose
Cravings, aversions, — did our green precinct
Take pride in me, at unawares distinct
With this or that endowment, — how, repressed
At once, such jetting power shrank to the rest!
Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave

My spirit thence unfitted to receive
The consummating spell? — that spell so near
Moreover! 'Waits he not the waking year?
His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe
By this; to welcome him, fresh runnels stripe
The thawed ravines; because of him, the wind
Walks like a herald. I shall surely find
Him now!'
"And chief, that earnest April morn
Of Richard's Love-court, was it time, so worn
And white my cheek, so idly my blood beat,
Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet
And saying as she prompted; till outburst
One face from all the faces. Not then first
I knew it; where in maple chamber glooms,
Crowned with what sanguine-heart pomegranate blooms,
Advanced it ever? Men's acknowledgment
Sanctioned my own: 't was taken, Palma's bent, —
Sordello, — recognized, accepted.
"Dumb
Sat she still scheming. Ecelin would come
Gaunt, scared, 'Cesano baffles me,' he 'd say:
'Better I fought it out, my father's way!
Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats,
And you and your Taurello yonder! — what 's
Romano's business there?' An hour's concern
To cure the froward Chief! — induce return
As heartened from those overmeaning eyes,
Wound up to persevere, — his enterprise
Marked out anew, its exigent of wit
Apportioned, — she at liberty to sit
And scheme against the next emergence, I —
To covet her Taurello-sprite, made fly
Or fold the wing — to con your horoscope

For leave command those steely shafts shoot ope,
Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness
In blank smooth snow. What semblance of success
To any of my plans for making you
Mine and Romano's? Break the first wall through,
Tread o'er the ruins of the Chief, supplant
His sons beside, still, vainest were the vaunt:
There, Salinguerra would obstruct me sheer,
And the insuperable Tuscan, here,
Stay me! But one wild eve that Lady died
In her lone chamber: only I beside:
Taurello far at Naples, and my sire
At Padua, Ecelin away in ire
With Alberic. She held me thus — a clutch
To make our spirits as our bodies touch —
And so began flinging the past up, heaps
Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps
Within her soul; deeds rose along with dreams,
Fragments of many miserable schemes,
Secrets, more secrets, then — no, not the last —
'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the past,
How . . . ay, she told me, gathering up her face,
All left of it, into one arch-grimace
To die with . . .
"Friend, 't is gone! but not the fear
Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear.
Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart grow weak
When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to speak
— Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark! — for in
Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin
(How summoned, who divines?) — looking as if
He understood why Adelaide lay stiff
Already in my arms; for 'Girl, how must
I manage Este in the matter thrust
Upon me, how unravel your bad coil? —

Since' (he declared) ''t is on your brow — a soil
Like hers there!' then in the same breath, 'he lacked
No counsel after all, had signed no pact
With devils, nor was treason here or there,
Goito or Vicenza, his affair:
He buried it in Adelaide's deep grave,
Would begin life afresh, now, — would not slave
For any Friedrich's nor Taurello's sake!
What booted him to meddle or to make
In Lombardy?' And afterward I knew
The meaning of his promise to undo
All she had done — why marriages were made,
New friendships entered on, old followers paid
With curses for their pains, — new friends' amaze
At height, when, passing out by Gate Saint Blaise,
He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head
Over a friar's neck, — 'had vowed,' he said,
'Long since, nigh thirty years, because his wife
And child were saved there, to bestow his life
On God, his gettings on the Church.'
"Exiled
Within Goito, still one dream beguiled
My days and nights; 't was found, the orb I sought
To serve, those glimpses came of Fomalhaut,
No other: but how serve it? — authorize
You and Romano mingle destinies?
And straight Romano's angel stood beside
Me who had else been Boniface's bride,
For Salinguerra 't was, with neck low bent,
And voice lightened to music, (as he meant
To learn, not teach me,) who withdrew the pall
From the dead past and straight revived it all,
Making me see how first Romano waxed,
Wherefore he waned now, why, if I relaxed
My grasp (even I!) would drop a thing effete,

Frayed by itself, unequal to complete
Its course, and counting every step astray
A gain so much. Romano, every way
Stable, a Lombard House now — why start back
Into the very outset of its track?
This patching principle which late allied
Our House with other Houses — what beside
Concerned the apparition, the first Knight
Who followed Conrad hither in such plight
His utmost wealth was summed in his one steed?
For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed
A task, in the beginning hazardous
To him as ever task can be to us;
But did the weather-beaten thief despair
When first our crystal cincture of warm air
That binds the Trevisan, — as its spice-belt
(Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus dwelt, —
Furtive he pierced, and Este was to face —
Despaired Saponian strength of Lombard grace?
Tried he at making surer aught made sure,
Maturing what already was mature?
No; his heart prompted Ecelo, 'Confront
Este, inspect yourself. What 's nature? Wont.
Discard three-parts your nature, and adopt
The rest as an advantage!' Old strength propped
The man who first grew Podestà among
The Vicentines, no less than, while there sprung
His palace up in Padua like a threat,
Their noblest spied a grace, unnoticed yet
In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object gained,
Romano was established — has remained —
'For are you not Italian, truly peers
With Este? *Azzo* better soothes our ears
Than *Alberic?* or is this lion's-crine
From over-mounts' (this yellow hair of mine)

'So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock?'
(Thus went he on with something of a mock)
'Wherefore recoil, then, from the very fate
Conceded you, refuse to imitate
Your model farther? Este long since left
Being mere Este: as a blade its heft,
Este required the Pope to further him:
And you, the Kaiser — whom your father's whim
Foregoes or, better, never shall forego
If Palma dare pursue what Ecelo
Commenced, but Ecelin desists from: just
As Adelaide of Susa could intrust
Her donative, — her Piedmont given the Pope,
Her Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope
'Twixt France and Italy, — to the superb
Matilda's perfecting, — so, lest aught curb
Our Adelaide's great counter-project for
Giving her Trentine to the Emperor
With passage here from Germany, — shall you
Take it, — my slender plodding talent, too!'
— Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.
"He
As Patron of the scattered family
Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit
Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit
Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,
'Nothing remains,' Taurello said, 'but wait
Some rash procedure: Palma was the link,
As Agnes' child, between us, and they shrink
From losing Palma: judge if we advance,
Your father's method, your inheritance!'
The day I was betrothed to Boniface
At Padua by Taurello's self, took place
The outrage of the Ferrarese: again,
The day I sought Verona with the train

Agreed for, — by Taurello's policy
Convicting Richard of the fault, since we
Were present to annul or to confirm, —
Richard, whose patience had outstayed its term,
Quitted Verona for the siege.
"And now
What glory may engird Sordello's brow
Through this? A month since at Oliero slunk
All that was Ecelin into a monk;
But how could Salinguerra so forget
His liege of thirty years as grudge even yet
One effort to recover him? He sent
Forthwith the tidings of this last event
To Ecelin — declared that he, despite
The recent folly, recognized his right
To order Salinguerra: 'Should he wring
Its uttermost advantage out, or fling
This chance away? Or were his sons now Head
O' the House?' Through me Taurello's missive sped;
My father's answer will by me return.
Behold! 'For him,' he writes, 'no more concern
With strife than, for his children, with fresh plots
Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he blots
For aye: Taurello shall no more subserve,
Nor Ecelin impose.' Lest this unnerve
Taurello at this juncture, slack his grip
Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip, —
I, in his sons' default (who, mating with
Este, forsake Romano as the frith
Its mainsea for that firmland, sea makes head
Against) I stand, Romano, — in their stead
Assume the station they desert, and give
Still, as the Kaiser's representative,
Taurello license he demands. Midnight —

Morning — by noon to-morrow, making light
Of the League's issue, we, in some gay weed
Like yours, disguised together, may precede
The arbitrators to Ferrara: reach
Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach
The rest! Then say if I have misconceived
Your destiny, too readily believed
The Kaiser's cause your own!"
And Palma 's fled.
Though no affirmative disturbs the head,
A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er,
Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,
Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be
Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy,
Soul of this body — to wield this aggregate
Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate
Though he should live — a centre of disgust
Even — apart, core of the outward crust
He vivifies, assimilates. For thus
I bring Sordello to the rapturous
Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one round
Of life was quite accomplished; and he found
Not only that a soul, whate'er its might,
Is insufficient to its own delight,
Both in corporeal organs and in skill
By means of such to body forth its Will —
And, after, insufficient to apprise
Men of that Will, oblige them recognize
The Hid by the Revealed — but that, — the last
Nor lightest of the struggles overpast, —
Will, he bade abdicate, which would not void
The throne, might sit there, suffer he enjoyed
Mankind, a varied and divine array
Incapable of homage, the first way,
Nor fit to render incidentally

Tribute connived at, taken by the by,
In joys. If thus with warrant to rescind
The ignominious exile of mankind —
Whose proper service, ascertained intact
As yet, (to be by him themselves made act,
Not watch Sordello acting each of them)
Was to secure — if the true diadem
Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank
The wisdom of that golden Palma, — thank
Verona's Lady in her citadel
Founded by Gaulish Brennus, legends tell:
And truly when she left him, the sun reared
A head like the first clamberer's who peered
A-top the Capitol, his face on flame
With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came.
Nor slight too much my rhymes — that spring, dispread,
Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
Like an escape of angels! Rather say,
My transcendental platan! mounting gay
(An archimage so courts a novice-queen)
With tremulous silvered trunk, whence branches sheen
Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver soon
With colored buds, then glowing like the moon
One mild flame, — last a pause, a burst, and all
Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,
Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-dust,
Ending the weird work prosecuted just
For her amusement; he decrepit, stark,
Dozes; her uncontrolled delight may mark
Apart —
Yet not so, surely never so
Only, as good my soul were suffered go
O'er the lagune: forth fare thee, put aside —

Entrance thy synod, as a god may glide
Out of the world he fills, and leave it mute
For myriad ages as we men compute,
Returning into it without a break
O' the consciousness! They sleep, and I awake
O'er the lagune, being at Venice.
Note,
In just such songs as Eglamor (say) wrote
With heart and soul and strength, for he believed
Himself achieving all to be achieved
By singer — in such songs you find alone
Completeness, judge the song and singer one,
And either purpose answered, his in it
Or its in him: while from true works (to wit
Sordello's dream-performances that will
Never be more than dreamed) escapes there still
Some proof, the singer's proper life was 'neath
The life his song exhibits, this a sheath
To that; a passion and a knowledge far
Transcending these, majestic as they are,
Smouldered; his lay was but an episode
In the bard's life: which evidence you owed
To some slight weariness, some looking-off
Or start-away. The childish skit or scoff
In "Charlemagne," (his poem, dreamed divine
In every point except one silly line
About the restiff daughters) — what may lurk
In that? "My life commenced before this work,"
(So I interpret the significance
Of the bard's start aside and look askance)
"My life continues after: on I fare
With no more stopping, possibly, no care
To note the undercurrent, the why and how,
Where, when, o' the deeper life, as thus just now.
But, silent, shall I cease to live? Alas

For you! who sigh, 'When shall it come to pass
We read that story? How will he compress
The future gains, his life's true business,
Into the better lay which — that one flout,
Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out —
Engrosses him already, though professed
To meditate with us eternal rest,
And partnership in all his life has found?' "
'T is but a sailor's promise, weather-bound:
"Strike sail, slip cable, here the bark be moored
For once, the awning stretched, the poles assured!
Noontide above; except the wave's crisp dash,
Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash,
The margin's silent: out with every spoil
Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,
This serpent of a river to his head
I' the midst! Admire each treasure, as we spread
The bank, to help us tell our history
Aright: give ear, endeavor to descry
The groves of giant rushes, how they grew
Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed through,
What mountains yawned, forests to give us vent
Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went
Till . . . may that beetle (shake your cap) attest
The springing of a land-wind from the West!"
— Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day!
To-morrow, and, the pageant moved away
Down to the poorest tent-pole, we and you
Part company: no other may pursue
Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate
Intends, if triumph or decline await
The tempter of the everlasting steppe.
I muse this on a ruined palace-step
At Venice: why should I break off, nor sit
Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit

England gave birth to? Who 's adorable
Enough reclaim a —— no Sordello's Will
Alack! — be queen to me? That Bassanese
Busied among her smoking fruit-boats? These
Perhaps from our delicious Asolo
Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico
Not prettier, bind June lilies into sheaves
To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves
Soiled by their own loose gold-meal? Ah, beneath
The cool arch stoops she, brownest cheek! Her wreath
Endures a month — a half-month — if I make
A queen of her, continue for her sake
Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan girl
Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl
In the dead black Giudecca proves sea-weed
Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed
Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned post
For gondolas.
You sad dishevelled ghost
That pluck at me and point, are you advised
I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised
— Jewels i' the locks that love no crownet like
Their native field-buds and the green wheat-spike,
So fair! — who left this end of June's turmoil,
Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,
Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free
In dream, came join the peasants o'er the sea.)
Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess
There is such niggard stock of happiness
To share, that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch,
One labors ineffectually to stretch
It o'er you so that mother and children, both
May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth!
Divide the robe yet farther: be content

With seeing just a score pre-eminent
Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights,
Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights!
For, these in evidence, you clearlier claim
A like garb for the rest, — grace all, the same
As these my peasants. I ask youth and strength
And health for each of you, not more — at length
Grown wise, who asked at home that the whole race
Might add the spirit's to the body's grace,
And all be dizened out as chiefs and bards.
But in this magic weather one discards
Much old requirement. Venice seems a type
Of Life — 'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,
As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt naught and naught:
'T is Venice, and 't is Life — as good you sought
To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone
Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,
As hinder Life the evil with the good
Which make up Living, rightly understood.
Only, do finish something! Peasants, queens,
Take them, made happy by whatever means,
Parade them for the common credit, vouch
That a luckless residue, we send to crouch
In corners out of sight, was just as framed
For happiness, its portion might have claimed
As well, and so, obtaining joy, had stalked
Fastuous as any! — such my project, balked
Already; I hardly venture to adjust
The first rags, when you find me. To mistrust
Me! — nor unreasonably. You, no doubt,
Have the true knack of tiring suitors out
With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes
Inveterately tear-shot: there, be wise,
Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant

You insult! — shall your friend (not slave) be shent
For speaking home? Beside care-bit erased
Broken-up beauties ever took my taste
Supremely; and I love you more, far more
Than her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor.
Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where
A whisper came, "Let others seek! — thy care
Is found, thy life's provision; if thy race
Should be thy mistress, and into one face
The many faces crowd?" Ah, had I, judge,
Or no, your secret? Rough apparel — grudge
All ornaments save tag or tassel worn
To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn —
Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go
Alone (that 's saddest, but it must be so)
Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside,
Aught desultory or undignified, —
Then, ravishingest lady, will you pass
Or not each formidable group, the mass
Before the Basilic (that feast gone by,
God's great day of the Corpus Domini)
And, wistfully foregoing proper men,
Come timid up to me for alms? And then
The luxury to hesitate, feign do
Some unexampled grace! — when, whom but you
Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear
Further before you say, it is to sneer
I call you ravishing; for I regret
Little that she, whose early foot was set
Forth as she 'd plant it on a pedestal,
Now, i' the silent city, seems to fall
Toward me — no wreath, only a lip's unrest
To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed
Dry of their tears upon my bosom. Strange
Such sad chance should produce in thee such change,

My love! Warped souls and bodies! yet God spoke
Of right-hand, foot and eye — selects our yoke,
Sordello, as your poetship may find!
So, sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind
Their foolish talk; we 'll manage reinstate
Your old worth; ask moreover, when they prate
Of evil men past hope, "Don't each contrive,
Despite the evil you abuse, to live? —
Keeping, each losel, through a maze of lies,
His own conceit of truth? to which he hies
By obscure windings, tortuous, if you will,
But to himself not inaccessible;
He sees truth, and his lies are for the crowd
Who cannot see; some fancied right allowed
His vilest wrong, empowered the losel clutch
One pleasure from a multitude of such
Denied him." Then assert, "All men appear
To think all better than themselves, by here
Trusting a crowd they wrong; but really," say,
"All men think all men stupider than they,
Since, save themselves, no other comprehends
The complicated scheme to make amends
— Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance,
Good labors to exist." A slight advance, —
Merely to find the sickness you die through,
And naught beside! but if one can't eschew
One's portion in the common lot, at least
One can avoid an ignorance increased
Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint
How naught were like dispensing without stint
The water of life — so easy to dispense
Beside, when one has probed the centre whence
Commotion 's born — could tell you of it all!
"— Meantime, just meditate my madrigal
O' the mugwort that conceals a dewdrop safe!"

What, dullard? we and you in smothery chafe,
Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin
The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,
A hungry sun above us, sands that bung
Our throats, — each dromedary lolls a tongue,
Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,
And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap,
And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,
— Remark, you wonder any one needs choke
With founts about! Potsherd him, Gibeonites!
While awkwardly enough your Moses smites
The rock, though he forego his Promised Land
Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and
Figure as Metaphysic Poet . . . ah,
Mark ye the dim first oozings? Meribah!
Then, quaffing at the fount my courage gained,
Recall — not that I prompt ye — who explained . . .
"Presumptuous!" interrupts one. You, not I
'T is, brother, marvel at and magnify
Such office: "office," quotha? can we get
To the beginning of the office yet?
What do we here? simply experiment
Each on the other's power and its intent
When elsewhere tasked, — if this of mine were trucked
For yours to either's good, — we watch construct,
In short, an engine: with a finished one,
What it can do, is all, — naught, how 't is done.
But this of ours yet in probation, dusk
A kernel of strange wheelwork through its husk
Grows into shape by quarters and by halves;
Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's
Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,
Make out each other more or less precise —
The scope of the whole engine 's to be proved;

We die: which means to say, the whole 's removed,
Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex gin, —
To be set up anew elsewhere, begin
A task indeed, but with a clearer clime
Than the murk lodgment of our building-time.
And then, I grant you, it behoves forget
How 't is done — all that amuse us yet
So long: and, while you turn upon your heel,
Pray that I be not busy slitting steel
Or shredding brass, camped on some virgin shore
Under a cluster of fresh stars, before
I name a tithe o' the wheels I trust to do!
 So occupied, then, are we: hitherto,
At present, and a weary while to come,
The office of ourselves, — nor blind nor dumb,
And seeing somewhat of man's state, — has been,
For the worst of us, to say they so have seen;
For the better, what it was they saw; the best
Impart the gift of seeing to the rest:
"So that I glance," says such an one, "around,
And there 's no face but I can read profound
Disclosures in; this stands for hope, that — fear,
And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here!
'Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts
O'erarch, will blind thee! Said I not? She shuts
Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet!
Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat
Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,
Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore
Thy sweet shape, Zanze! Therefore stoop!'
" 'That 's truth!'
(Adjudge you) 'the incarcerated youth
Would say that!'
"Youth? Plara the bard? Set down
That Plara spent his youth in a grim town

Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about
The minster for protection, never out
Of its black belfry's shade and its bells' roar.
The brighter shone the suburb, — all the more
Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof
Of any chance escape of joy, — some roof,
Taller than they, allowed the rest detect,
Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect
Who could, 't was meant for laughter, that ploughed cheek's
Repulsive gleam!) when the sun stopped both peaks
Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,
Then sank, a huge flame on its socket edge,
With leavings on the gray glass oriel-pane
Ghastly some minutes more. No fear of rain —
The minster minded that! in heaps the dust
Lay everywhere. This town, the minster's trust,
Held Plara; who, its denizen, bade hail
In twice twelve sonnets, Tempe's dewy vale."
" 'Exact the town, the minster and the street!' "
"As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat:
Lust triumphs and is gay, Love 's triumphed o'er
And sad: but Lucio 's sad. I said before,
Love 's sad, not Lucio; one who loves may be
As gay his love has leave to hope, as he
Downcast that lusts' desire escapes the springe:
'T is of the mood itself I speak, what tinge
Determines it, else colorless, — or mirth,
Or melancholy, as from heaven or earth."
" 'Ay, that 's the variation's gist!'
"Indeed?
Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed!
And having seen too what I saw, be bold
And next encounter what I do behold
(That 's sure) but bid you take on trust!"

Attack

The use and purpose of such sights! Alack,
Not so unwisely does the crowd dispense
On Salinguerras praise in preference
To the Sordellos: men of action, these!
Who, seeing just as little as you please,
Yet turn that little to account, — engage
With, do not gaze at, — carry on, a stage,
The work o' the world, not merely make report
The work existed ere their day! In short,
When at some future no-time a brave band
Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand
In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile where 's the hurt
Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert,
At whose defection mortals stare aghast
As though heaven's bounteous windows were slammed fast
Incontinent? Whereas all you, beneath,
Should scowl at, bruise their lips and break their teeth
Who ply the pullies, for neglecting you:
And therefore have I moulded, made anew
A Man, and give him to be turned and tried,
Be angry with or pleased at. On your side,
Have ye times, places, actors of your own?
Try them upon Sordello when full-grown,
And then — ah then! If Hercules first parched
His foot in Egypt only to be marched
A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,
What chance have I? The demigod was mute
Till, at the altar, where time out of mind
Such guests became oblations, chaplets twined
His forehead long enough, and he began
Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man.

Take not affront, my gentle audience! whom
No Hercules shall make his hecatomb,
Believe, nor from his brows your chaplet rend —
That 's your kind suffrage, yours, my patron-friend,
Whose great verse blares unintermittent on
Like your own trumpeter at Marathon, —
You who, Platæa and Salamis being scant,
Put up with Ætna for a stimulant —
And did well, I acknowledged, as he loomed
Over the midland sea last month, presumed
Long, lay demolished in the blazing West
At eve, while towards him tilting cloudlets pressed
Like Persian ships at Salamis. Friend, wear
A crest proud as desert while I declare
Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring
Tears of its color from that painted king
Who lost it, I would, for that smile which went
To my heart, fling it in the sea, content,
Wearing your verse in place, an amulet
Sovereign against all passion, wear and fret!
My English Eyebright, if you are not glad
That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad
Dishevelled form, wherein I put mankind
To come at times and keep my pact in mind,
Renewed me, — hear no crickets in the hedge,
Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge
At home, and may the summer showers gush
Without a warning from the missel thrush!
So, to our business, now, — the fate of such
As find our common nature — overmuch
Despised because restricted and unfit
To bear the burthen they impose on it —
Cling when they would discard it; craving strength
To leap from the allotted world, at length
They do leap, — flounder on without a term,

Each a god's germ, doomed to remain a germ
In unexpanded infancy, unless . . .
But that 's the story — dull enough, confess!
There might be fitter subjects to allure;
Still, neither misconceive my portraiture
Nor undervalue its adornments quaint:
What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint.
Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,
Then say if you condemn me or acquit.
John the Beloved, banished Antioch
For Patmos, bade collectively his flock
Farewell, but set apart the closing eve
To comfort those his exile most would grieve,
He knew: a touching spectacle, that house
In motion to receive him! Xanthus' spouse
You missed, made panther's meat a month since; but
Xanthus himself (his nephew 't was, they shut
'Twixt boards and sawed asunder) Polycarp,
Soft Charicle, next year no wheel could warp
To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the rest
Were ranged; thro' whom the gray disciple pressed,
Busily blessing right and left, just stopped
To pat one infant's curls, the hangman cropped
Soon after, reached the portal. On its hinge
The door turns and he enters: what quick twinge
Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix
Whereon, why like some spectral candlestick's
Branch the disciple's arms? Dead swooned he, woke
Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp, heart-broke,
"Get thee behind me, Satan! Have I toiled
To no more purpose? Is the gospel foiled
Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus' hearth,
Portrayed with sooty garb and features swarth —
Ah, Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled

To see the — the — the Devil domiciled?"
Whereto sobbed Xanthus, "Father, 't is yourself
Installed, a limning which our utmost pelf
Went to procure against to-morrow's loss;
And that 's no twy-prong, but a pastoral cross,
You 're painted with!"
His puckered brows unfold —
And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

BOOK THE FOURTH

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case;
The lady-city, for whose sole embrace
Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms
A brawny mischief to the fragile charms
They tugged for — one discovering that to twist
Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist
Secured a point of vantage — one, how best
He 'd parry that by planting in her breast
His elbow spike — each party too intent
For noticing, howe'er the battle went,
The conqueror would but have a corpse to kiss.
"May Boniface be duly damned for this!"
— Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned,
From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned
His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth:
"A boon, sweet Christ — let Salinguerra seethe
In hell forever, Christ, and let myself
Be there to laugh at him!" — moaned some young Guelf
Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast
To the charred lintel of the doorway, last
His father stood within to bid him speed.
The thoroughfares were overrun with weed

— Docks, quitchgrass, loathy mallows no man plants.
The stranger, none of its inhabitants
Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again,
And ask the purpose of a splendid train
Admitted on a morning; every town
Of the East League was come by envoy down
To treat for Richard's ransom: here you saw
The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw
The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross
On its white field. A-tiptoe o'er the fosse
Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully
After the flock of steeples he might spy
In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago
To mend the ramparts: sure the laggards know
The Pope 's as good as here! They paced the street
More soberly. At last, "Taurello greets
The League," announced a pursuivant, — "will match
Its courtesy, and labors to dispatch
At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent
On pressing matters from his post at Trent,
With Mainard Count of Tyrol, — simply waits
Their going to receive the delegates."
"Tito!" Our delegates exchanged a glance,
And, keeping the main way, admired askance
The lazy engines of outlandish birth,
Couched like a king each on its bank of earth —
Arbalist, manganel and catapult;
While stationed by, as waiting a result,
Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased
Working to watch the strangers. "This, at least,
Were better spared; he scarce presumes gainsay
The League's decision! Get our friend away
And profit for the future: how else teach

Fools 't is not safe to stray within claw's reach
Ere Salinguerra's final gasp be blown?
Those mere convulsive scratches find the bone.
Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's nare?"
The carrochs halted in the public square.
Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,
Men prattled, freelier that the crested gaunt
White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak
Was missing, and whoever chose might speak
"Ecelin" boldly out: so, — "Ecelin
Needed his wife to swallow half the sin
And sickens by himself: the devil's whelp,
He styles his son, dwindles away, no help
From conserves, your fine triple-curded froth
Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-broth —
Eh? Jubilate!" — "Peace! no little word
You utter here that 's not distinctly heard
Up at Oliero: he was absent sick
When we besieged Bassano — who, i' the thick
O' the work, perceived the progress Azzo made,
Like Ecelin, through his witch Adelaide?
She managed it so well that, night by night
At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite,
First fresh, pale by-and-by without a wound,
And, when it came with eyes filmed as in swound,
They knew the place was taken." — "Ominous
That Ghibellins should get what cautelous
Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench
Vainly; Saint George contrived his town a trench
O' the marshes, an impermeable bar."
" — Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar
Of Padua, rather; veins embrace upon
His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion."
What now? — "The founts! God's bread, touch
not a plank!

A crawling hell of carrion — every tank
Choke-full! — found out just now to Cino's cost —
The same who gave Taurello up for lost,
And, making no account of fortune's freaks,
Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks
Back now with Concorezzi: 'faith! they drag
Their carroch to San Vitale, plant the flag
On his own palace, so adroitly razed
He knew it not; a sort of Guelf folk gazed
And laughed apart; Cino disliked their air —
Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care —
Seats himself on the tank's edge — will begin
To hum, *za, za, Cavaler Ecelin* —
A silence; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,
Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each time,
At last, *za, za* and up with a fierce kick
Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick
Gray hair about his spur!"
Which means, they lift
The covering, Salinguerra made a shift
To stretch upon the truth; as well avoid
Further disclosures; leave them thus employed.
Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,
And poor Ferrara puts a softened face
On her misfortunes. Let us scale this tall
Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall
Bastioned within by trees of every sort
On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short;
Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,
The fig-tree reared itself, — but stark and cramped,
Made fools of, like tamed lions: whence, on the edge,
Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge
Of shade, were shrubs inserted, warp and woof,
Which smothered up that variance. Scale the roof
Of solid tops, and o'er the slope you slide

Down to a grassy space level and wide,
Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees
Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,
Set by itself: and in the centre spreads,
Borne upon three uneasy leopards' heads,
A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt
Of water bubbles in. The walls begirt
With trees leave off on either hand; pursue
Your path along a wondrous avenue
Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone,
With aloes leering everywhere, gray-grown
From many a Moorish summer: how they wind
Out of the fissures! likelier to bind
The building than those rusted cramps which drop
Already in the eating sunshine. Stop,
You fleeting shapes above there! Ah, the pride
Or else despair of the whole country-side!
A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps,
God, goddess, woman, man, the Greek rough-rasps
In crumbling Naples marble — meant to look
Like those Messina marbles Constance took
Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed
To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide, —
A certain font with caryatides
Since cloistered at Goito; only, these
Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop
Able to right themselves — who see you, stoop
Their arms o' the instant after you! Unplucked
By this or that, you pass; for they conduct
To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,
Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien
Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle
No doubt. Here, left a sullen breathing-while,
Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood
For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood

Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath
Those shading fingers in their iron sheath,
Steadied his strengths amid the buzz and stir
Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre
At the announcement of his over-match
To wind the day's diversion up, dispatch
The pertinacious Gaul: while, limbs one heap,
The Slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched leap
Dart after dart forth, as her hero's car
Clove dizzily the solid of the war
— Let coil about his knees for pride in him.
We reach the farthest terrace, and the grim
San Pietro Palace stops us.
Such the state
Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate
Sicilian marvels, that his girlish wife
Retrude still might lead her ancient life
In her new home: whereat enlarged so much
Neighbors upon the novel princely touch
He took, — who here imprisons Boniface.
Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace;
And here, emerging from the labyrinth
Below, Sordello paused beside the plinth
Of the door-pillar.
He had really left
Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft
From the morass) where Este's camp was made;
The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade —
All had been seen by him, but scarce as when, —
Eager for cause to stand aloof from men
At every point save the fantastic tie
Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry, —
He made account of such. A crowd, — he meant
To task the whole of it; each part's intent

Concerned him therefore: and, the more he pried,
The less became Sordello satisfied
With his own figure at the moment. Sought
He respite from his task? Descried he aught
Novel in the anticipated sight
Of all these livers upon all delight?
This phalanx, as of myriad points combined,
Whereby he still had imaged the mankind
His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,
His age — in plans to prove at least such thing
Had been so dreamed, — which now he must impress
With his own will, effect a happiness
By theirs, — supply a body to his soul
Thence, and become eventually whole
With them as he had hoped to be without —
Made these the mankind he once raved about?
Because a few of them were notable,
Should all be figured worthy note? As well
Expect to find Taurello's triple line
Of trees a single and prodigious pine.
Real pines rose here and there; but, close among,
Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a throng
Of shrubs, he saw, — a nameless common sort
O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report
And hurried into corners, or at best
Admitted to be fancied like the rest.
Reckon that morning's proper chiefs — how few!
And yet the people grew, the people grew,
Grew ever, as if the many there indeed,
More left behind and most who should succeed, —
Simply in virtue of their mouths and eyes,
Petty enjoyments and huge miseries, —
Mingled with, and made veritably great
Those chiefs: he overlooked not Mainard's state
Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead

Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head
Of infinite and absent Tyrolese
Or Paduans; startling all the more, that these
Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for,
Yet doubtless on the whole (like Eglamor)
Smiling; for if a wealthy man decays
And out of store of robes must wear, all days,
One tattered suit, alike in sun and shade,
'T is commonly some tarnished gay brocade
Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more:
Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store
Of looks is fain upgather, keep unfurled
For common wear as she goes through the world,
The faint remainder of some worn-out smile
Meant for a feast-night's service merely. While
Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus, —
(Crowds no way interfering to discuss,
Much less dispute, life's joys with one employed
In envying them, — or, if they aught enjoyed,
Where lingered something indefinable
In every look and tone, the mirth as well
As woe, that fixed at once his estimate
Of the result, their good or bad estate) —
Old memories returned with new effect:
And the new body, ere he could suspect,
Cohered, mankind and he were really fused,
The new self seemed impatient to be used
By him, but utterly another way
Than that anticipated: strange to say,
They were too much below him, more in thrall
Than he, the adjunct than the principal.
What booted scattered units? — here a mind
And there, which might repay his own to find,
And stamp, and use? — a few, howe'er august,
If all the rest were grovelling in the dust?

No: first a mighty equilibrium, sure,
Should he establish, privilege procure
For all, the few had long possessed! He felt
An error, an exceeding error melt:
While he was occupied with Mantuan chants,
Behoved him think of men, and take their wants,
Such as he now distinguished every side,
As his own want which might be satisfied, —
And, after that, think of rare qualities
Of his own soul demanding exercise.
It followed naturally, through no claim
On their part, which made virtue of the aim
At serving them, on his, — that, past retrieve,
He felt now in their toils, theirs — nor could leave
Wonder how, in the eagerness to rule,
Impress his will on mankind, he (the fool!)
Had never even entertained the thought
That this his last arrangement might be fraught
With incidental good to them as well,
And that mankind's delight would help to swell
His own. So, if he sighed, as formerly
Because the merry time of life must fleet,
'T was deeplier now, — for could the crowds repeat
Their poor experiences? His hand that shook
Was twice to be deplored. "The Legate, look!
With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs on a thread,
Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head,
Large tongue, moist open mouth; and this long while
That owner of the idiotic smile
Serves them!"
He fortunately saw in time
His fault however, and since the office prime
Includes the secondary — best accept
Both offices; Taurello, its adept,

Could teach him the preparatory one,
And how to do what he had fancied done
Long previously, ere take the greater task.
How render first these people happy? Ask
The people's friends: for there must be one good,
One way to it — the Cause! He understood
The meaning now of Palma; why the jar
Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far
Of Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard hope
And Rome's despair? — 'twixt Emperor and Pope
The confused shifting sort of Eden tale —
Hardihood still recurring, still to fail —
That foreign interloping fiend, this free
And native overbrooding deity:
Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms
The Kaiser ruined, troubling even the calms
Of paradise; or, on the other hand,
The Pontiff, as the Kaisers understand,
One snake-like cursed of God to love the ground,
Whose heavy length breaks in the noor profound
Some saving tree — which needs the Kaiser, dressed
As the dislodging angel of that pest:
Yet flames that pest bedropped, flat head, full fold,
With coruscating dower of dyes. "Behold
The secret, so to speak, and master-spring
O' the contest! — which of the two Powers shall bring
Men good, perchance the most good: ay, it may
Be that! — the question, which best knows the way."
And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past
Out of San Pietro; never seemed the last
Of archers, slingers: and our friend began
To recollect strange modes of serving man —
Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,

And more. "This way of theirs may, — who can
tell? —
Need perfecting," said he: "let all be solved
At once! Taurello 't is, the task devolved
On late: confront Taurello!"
And at last
He did confront him. Scarce an hour had past
When forth Sordello came, older by years
Than at his entry. Unexampled fears
Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute
And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,
Into Ferrara — not the empty town
That morning witnessed: he went up and down
Streets whence the veil had been stript shred by
shred,
So that, in place of huddling with their dead
Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,
Townsfolk make shift to crawl forth, sit like friends
With any one. A woman gave him choice
Of her two daughters, the infantile voice
Or the dimpled knee, for half a chain, his throat
Was clasped with; but an archer knew the coat —
Its blue cross and eight lilies, — bade beware
One dogging him in concert with the pair
Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his knife.
Night set in early, autumn dews were rife,
They kindled great fires while the Leaguers' mass
Began at every carroch: he must pass
Between the kneeling people. Presently
The carroch of Verona caught his eye
With purple trappings; silently he bent
Over its fire, when voices violent
Began, "Affirm not whom the youth was like
That struck me from the porch: I did not strike
Again: I too have chestnut hair; my kin

Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin.
Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away Sing!
Take
My glove for guerdon!" And for that man's sake
He turned: "A song of Eglamor's!" — scarce named,
When, "Our Sordello's rather!" — all exclaimed;
"Is not Sordello famousest for rhyme?"
He had been happy to deny, this time, —
Profess as heretofore the aching head
And failing heart, — suspect that in his stead
Some true Apollo had the charge of them,
Was champion to reward or to condemn,
So his intolerable risk might shift
Or share itself: but Naddo's precious gift
Of gifts, he owned, be certain! At the close —
"I made that," said he to a youth who rose
As if to hear: 't was Palma through the band
Conducted him in silence by her hand.
Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent
Gave place to Palma and her friend, who went
In turn at Montelungo's visit: one
After the other were they come and gone, —
These spokesmen for the Kaiser and the Pope,
This incarnation of the People's hope,
Sordello, — all the say of each was said;
And Salinguerra sat, — himself instead
Of these to talk with, lingered musing yet.
'T was a drear vast presence-chamber roughly set
In order for the morning's use; full face,
The Kaiser's ominous sign-mark had first place,
The crowned grim twy-necked eagle, coarsely-
blacked
With ochre on the naked wall; nor lacked
Romano's green and yellow either side;
But the new token Tito brought had tried

The Legate's patience — nay, if Palma knew
What Salinguerra almost meant to do
Until the sight of her restored his lip
A certain half-smile, three months' chieftainship
Had banished! Afterward, the Legate found
No change in him, nor asked what badge he wound
And unwound carelessly. Now sat the Chief
Silent as when our couple left, whose brief
Encounter wrought so opportune effect
In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject,
Though time 't was now if ever, to pause — fix
On any sort of ending: wiles and tricks
Exhausted, judge! his charge, the crazy town,
Just managed to be hindered crashing down —
His last sound troops ranged — care observed to post
His best of the maimed soldiers innermost —
So much was plain enough, but somehow struck
Him not before. And now with this strange luck
Of Tito's news, rewarding his address
So well, what thought he of? — how the success
With Friedrich's rescript there, would either hush
Old Ecelin's scruples, bring the manly flush
To his young son's white cheek, or, last, exempt
Himself from telling what there was to tempt?
No: that this minstrel was Romano's last
Servant — himself the first! Could he contrast
The whole! — that minstrel's thirty years just spent
In doing naught, their notablest event
This morning's journey hither, as I told —
Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,
A stammering awkward man that scarce dared raise
His eye before the magisterial gaze —
And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes
Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,

Cares and contrivances, yet, you would say,
'T was a youth nonchalantly looked away
Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick
Expostulating trees — so agile, quick
And graceful turned the head on the broad chest
Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest,
Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire
Across the room; and, loosened of its tire
Of steel, that head let breathe the comely brown
Large massive locks discolored as if a crown
Encircled them, so frayed the basnet where
A sharp white line divided clean the hair;
Glossy above, glossy below, it swept
Curling and fine about a brow thus kept
Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound:
This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,
Mused of, turned over books about. Square-faced,
No lion more; two vivid eyes, enchased
In hollows filled with many a shade and streak
Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek.
Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed
A lip supremely perfect else — unwarmed,
Unwidened, less or more; indifferent
Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent,
Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train
As now a period was fulfilled again:
Of such, a series made his life, compressed
In each, one story serving for the rest —
How his life-streams rolling arrived at last
At the barrier, whence, were it once overpast,
They would emerge, a river to the end, —
Gathered themselves up, paused, bade fate befriend,
Took the leap, hung a minute at the height,
Then fell back to oblivion infinite:

Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched garden-
grounds
Where late the adversary, breaking bounds,
Had gained him an occasion, That above,
That eagle, testified he could improve
Effectually. The Kaiser's symbol lay
Beside his rescript, a new badge by way
Of baldric; while, — another thing that marred
Alike emprise, achievement and reward, —
Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.
What past life did those flying thoughts pursue?
As his, few names in Mantua half so old;
But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled
It latterly, the Adelardi spared
No pains to rival them: both factions shared
Ferrara, so that, counted out, 't would yield
A product very like the city's shield,
Half black and white, or Ghibellin and Guelf
As after Salinguerra styled himself
And Este who, till Marchesalla died,
(Last of the Adelardi) — never tried
His fortune there: with Marchesalla's child
Would pass,— could Blacks and Whites be reconciled
And young Taurello wed Linguetta, — wealth
And sway to a sole grasp. Each treats by stealth
Already: when the Guelfs, the Ravennese
Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize
Linguetta, and are gone! Men's first dismay
Abated somewhat, hurries down, to lay
The after indignation, Boniface,
This Richard's father. "Learn the full disgrace
Averted, ere you blame us Guelfs, who rate
Your Salinguerra, your sole potentate
That might have been, 'mongst Este's valvassors —
Ay, Azzo's — who, not privy to, abhors

Our step; but we were zealous." Azzo then
To do with! Straight a meeting of old men:
"Old Salinguerra dead, his heir a boy,
What if we change our ruler and decoy
The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere
With Italy to build in, fix him here,
Settle the city's troubles in a trice?
For private wrong, let public good suffice!"
In fine, young Salinguerra's stanchest friends
Talked of the townsmen making him amends,
Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was
Rare sport, one morning, over the green grass
A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain,
Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again
In time for Azzo's entry with the bride;
Count Boniface rode smirking at their side;
"She brings him half Ferrara," whispers flew,
"And all Ancona! If the stripling knew!"
Anon the stripling was in Sicily
Where Heinrich ruled in right of Constance; he
Was gracious nor his guest incapable;
Each understood the other. So it fell,
One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at ease,
Had near forgotten by what precise degrees
He crept at first to such a downy seat,
The Count trudged over in a special heat
To bid him of God's love dislodge from each
Of Salinguerra's palaces, — a breach
Might yawn else, not so readily to shut,
For who was just arrived at Mantua but
The youngster, sword on thigh and tuft on chin,
With tokens for Celano, Ecelin,
Pistore, and the like! Next news, — no whit
Do any of Ferrara's domes befit
His wife of Heinrich's very blood: a band

Of foreigners assemble, understand
Garden-constructing, level and surround,
Build up and bury in. A last news crowned
The consternation: since this infant's birth,
He only waits they end his wondrous girth
Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà,
To visit Mantua. When the Podestà
Ecelin, at Vicenza, called his friend
Taurello thither, what could be their end
But to restore the Ghibellins' late Head,
The Kaiser helping? He with most to dread
From vengeance and reprisal, Azzo, there
With Boniface beforehand, as aware
Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled
Both plotters: but the Guelfs in triumph yelled
Too hastily. The burning and the flight,
And how Taurello, occupied that night
With Ecelin, lost wife and son, I told:
— Not how he bore the blow, retained his hold,
Got friends safe through, left enemies the worst
O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at first:
But afterward men heard not constantly
Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be!
Though Azzo simply gained by the event
A shifting of his plagues — the first, content
To fall behind the second and estrange
So far his nature, suffer such a change
That in Romano sought he wife and child,
And for Romano's sake seemed reconciled
To losing individual life, which shrunk
As the other prospered — mortised in his trunk;
Like a dwarf palm which wanton Arabs foil
Of bearing its own proper wine and oil,
By grafting into it the stranger-vine,
Which sucks its heart out, sly and serpentine,

Till forth one vine-palm feathers to the root,
And red drops moisten the insipid fruit.
Once Adelaide set on, — the subtle mate
Of the weak soldier, urged to emulate
The Church's valiant women deed for deed,
And paragon her namesake, win the meed
O' the great Matilda, — soon they overbore
The rest of Lombardy, — not as before
By an instinctive truculence, but patched
The Kaiser's strategy until it matched
The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel means.
"Only, why is it Salinguerra screens
Himself behind Romano? — him we bade
Enjoy our shine i' the front, not seek the shade!"
— Asked Heinrich, somewhat of the tardiest
To comprehend. Nor Philip acquiesced
At once in the arrangement; reasoned, plied
His friend with offers of another bride,
A statelier function — fruitlessly: 't was plain
Taurello through some weakness must remain
Obscure. And Otho, free to judge of both
— Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth,
And this more plausible and facile wight
With every point a-sparkle — chose the right,
Admiring how his predecessors harped
On the wrong man: "Thus," quoth he, "wits are warped
By outsides!" Carelessly, meanwhile, his life
Suffered its many turns of peace and strife
In many lands — you hardly could surprise
The man; who shamed Sordello (recognized!)
In this as much beside, that, unconcerned
What qualities were natural or earned,
With no ideal of graces, as they came
He took them, singularly well the same

Speaking the Greek's own language, just because
Your Greek eludes you, leave the least of flaws
In contracts with him; while, since Arab lore
Holds the stars' secret — take one trouble more
And master it! 'T is done, and now deter
Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined for her,
From Friedrich's path! — Friedrich, whose pilgrim-
age
The same man puts aside, whom he 'll engage
To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch,
Come to Bassano, see Saint Francis' church
And judge of Guido the Bolognian's piece
Which, — lend Taurello credit, — rivals Greece —
Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits
Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's exploits.
For elegance, he strung the angelot,
Made rhymes thereto; for prowess, clove he not
Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper? Why
Detail you thus a varied mastery
But to show how Taurello, on the watch
For men, to read their hearts and thereby catch
Their capabilities and purposes,
Displayed himself so far as displayed these:
While our Sordello only cared to know
About men as a means whereby he 'd show
Himself, and men had much or little worth
According as they kept in or drew forth
That self; the other's choicest instruments
Surmised him shallow.
Meantime, malcontents
Dropped off, town after town grew wiser. "How
Change the world's face?" asked people; "as 't is
now
It has been, will be ever: very fine
Subjecting things profane to things divine,

In talk! This contumacy will fatigue
The vigilance of Este and the League!
The Ghibellins gain on us!" — as it happed.
Old Azzo and old Boniface, entrapped
By Ponte Alto, both in one month's space
Slept at Verona: either left a brace
Of sons — but, three years after, either's pair
Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir:
Azzo remained and Richard — all the stay
Of Este and Saint Boniface, at bay
As 't were. Then, either Ecelin grew old
Or his brain altered — not o' the proper mould
For new appliances — his old palm-stock
Endured no influx of strange strengths. He 'd rock
As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low
As proud of the completeness of his woe,
Then weep real tears; — now make some mad onslaught
On Este, heedless of the lesson taught
So painfully, — now cringe for peace, sue peace
At price of past gain, bar of fresh increase
To the fortunes of Romano. Up at last
Rose Este, down Romano sank as fast.
And men remarked these freaks of peace and war
Happened while Salinguerra was afar:
Whence every friend besought him, all in vain,
To use his old adherent's wits again.
Not he! — "who had advisers in his sons,
Could plot himself, nor needed any one's
Advice." 'T was Adelaide's remaining stanch
Prevented his destruction root and branch
Forthwith; but when she died, doom fell, for gay
He made alliances, gave lands away
To whom it pleased accept them, and withdrew
Forever from the world. Taurello, who

Was summoned to the convent, then refused
A word at the wicket, patience thus abused,
Promptly threw off alike his imbecile
Ally's yoke, and his own frank, foolish smile.
Soon a few movements of the happier sort
Changed matters, put himself in men's report
As heretofore; he had to fight, beside,
And that became him ever. So, in pride
And flushing of this kind of second youth,
He dealt a good-will blow. Este in truth
Lay prone — and men remembered, somewhat late,
A laughing old outrageous stifled hate
He bore to Este — how it would outbreak
At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake
In sunny weather — as that noted day
When with his hundred friends he tried to slay
Azzo before the Kaiser's face: and how,
On Azzo's calm refusal to allow
A liegeman's challenge, straight he too was calmed:
As if his hate could bear to lie embalmed,
Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, and survive
All intermediate crumblings, to arrive
At earth's catastrophe — 't was Este's crash
Not Azzo's he demanded, so, no rash
Procedure! Este's true antagonist
Rose out of Ecelin: all voices whist,
All eyes were sharpened, wits predicted. He
'T was, leaned in the embrasure absently,
Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace
With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face
I' the dust: but as the trees waved sere, his smile
Deepened, and words expressed its thought erewhile.
"Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer?
That we should stick together, all the year
I kept Vicenza! — How old Boniface,

Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,
He by that pillar, I at this, — caught each
In mid swing, more than fury of his speech,
Egging the rabble on to disavow
Allegiance to their Marquis — Bacchus, how
They boasted! Ecelin must turn their drudge,
Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge
Paying arrears of tribute due long since —
Bacchus! My man could promise then, nor wince:
The bones-and-muscles! Sound of wind and limb,
Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him:
And now he sits me, slavering and mute,
Intent on chafing each starved purple foot
Benumbed past aching with the altar slab:
Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab
Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps,
'Friedrich 's affirmed to be our side the Alps'
— Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet?
Sworn to abjure the world, its fume and fret,
God's own now? Drop the dormitory bar,
Enfold the scanty gray serge scapular
Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out!
So! But the midnight whisper turns a shout,
Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate
In the stone walls: the past, the world you hate
Is with you, ambush, open field — or see
The surging flame — we fire Vicenza — glee!
Follow, let Pilio and Bernardo chafe!
Bring up the Mantuans — through San Biagio — safe!
Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they writhe
And reach us? If they block the gate? No tithe
Can pass — keep back, you Bassanese! The edge,
Use the edge — shear, thrust, hew, melt down the wedge,

Let out the black of those black upturned eyes!
Hell — are they sprinkling fire too? The blood fries
And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear
Those upturned faces choking with despair.
Brave! Slidder through the reeking gate! 'How now?
You six had charge of her?' And then the vow
Comes, and the foam spirts, hair 's plucked, till one shriek
(I hear it) and you fling — you cannot speak —
Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who haled
The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled
This morn, naked across the fire: how crown
The archer that exhausted lays you down
Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies?
While one, while mine . . .
"Bacchus! I think there lies
More than one corpse there" (and he paced the room)
"— Another cinder somewhere: 't was my doom
Beside, my doom! If Adelaide is dead,
I live the same, this Azzo lives instead
Of that to me, and we pull, anyhow,
Este into a heap: the matter 's now
At the true juncture slipping us so oft.
Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed
His crown at such a juncture! Still, if holds
Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain enfolds
The neck of . . . who but this same Ecelin
That must recoil when the best days begin!
Recoil? that 's naught; if the recoiler leaves
His name for me to fight with, no one grieves:
But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock
His cloister to become my stumbling-block
Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 't is again —

The land's inevitable Head — explain
The reverences that subject us! Count
These Ecelins now! Not to say as fount,
Originating power of thought, — from twelve
That drop i' the trenches they joined hands to delve,
Six shall surpass him, but . . . why men must twine
Somehow with something! Ecelin 's a fine
Clear name! 'T were simpler, doubtless, twine with me
At once: our cloistered friend's capacity
Was of a sort! I had to share myself
In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf
That 's forced illume in fifty points the vast
Rare vapor he 's environed by. At last
My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en converge
And crown . . . no, Bacchus, they have yet to urge
The man be crowned!
"That aloe, an he durst,
Would climb! Just such a bloated sprawler first
I noted in Messina's castle-court
The day I came, when Heinrich asked in sport
If I would pledge my faith to win him back
His right in Lombardy: 'for, once bid pack
Marauders,' he continued, 'in my stead
You rule, Taurello!' and upon this head
Laid the silk glove of Constance — I see her
Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,
Retrude following!
"I am absolved
From further toil: the empery devolved
On me, 't was Tito's word: I have to lay
For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,
Prompt nobody, and render an account
Taurello to Taurello! Nay, I mount
To Friedrich: he conceives the post I kept,

— Who did true service, able or inept,
Who 's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I.
Me guerdoned, counsel follows: would he vie
With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface
Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race
Must break ere govern Lombardy. I point
How easy 't were to twist, once out of joint,
The socket from the bone: my Azzo's stare
Meanwhile! for I, this idle strap to wear,
Shall — fret myself abundantly, what end
To serve? There 's left me twenty years to spend
— How better than my old way? Had I one
Who labored to o'erthrow my work — a son
Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,
To root my pines up and then poison me,
Suppose — 't were worth while frustrate that!
Beside
Another life 's ordained me: the world's tide
Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press
Of waves, a single wave though weariness
Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore?
My life must be lived out in foam and roar,
No question. Fifty years the province held
Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,
He in the midst — who leaves this quaint stone place,
These trees a year or two, then not a trace
Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues
Like this poor minstrel with the foolish songs —
To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?
— Flowers one may tease, that never grow extinct.
Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where
I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair,
To overawe the aloes; and we trod
Those flowers, how call you such? — into the sod;
A stately foreigner — a world of pain

To make it thrive, arrest rough winds — all vain!
It would decline; these would not be destroyed:
And now, where is it? where can you avoid
The flowers? I frighten children twenty years
Longer! — which way, too, Ecelin appears
To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth
Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth:
They feel it at Vicenza! Fate, fate, fate,
My fine Taurello! Go you, promulgate
Friedrich's decree, and here 's shall aggrandize
Young Ecelin — your Prefect's badge! a prize
Too precious, certainly.
"How now? Compete
With my old comrade? shuffle from their seat
His children? Paltry dealing! Don't I know
Ecelin? now, I think, and years ago!
What 's changed — the weakness? did not I compound
For that, and undertake to keep him sound
Despite it? Here 's Taurello hankering
After a boy's preferment — this plaything
To carry, Bacchus!" And he laughed.
Remark
Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark
Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort
Fail: while these last are ever stopping short —
(So much they should — so little they can do!)
The careless tribe see nothing to pursue
If they desist; meantime their scheme succeeds.
Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds
Methodic with Taurello; so, he turned, —
Enough amused by fancies fairly earned
Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,
And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck, —
To his own petty but immediate doubt

If he could pacify the League without
Conceding Richard; just to this was brought
That interval of vain discursive thought!
As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit
Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot
Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black
Enormous watercourse which guides him back
To his own tribe again, where he is king;
And laughs because he guesses, numbering
The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch
Of the first lizard wrested from its couch
Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips
To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,
And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert-blast)
That he has reached its boundary, at last
May breathe; — thinks o'er enchantments of the South
Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth,
Eyes, nails, and hair; but, these enchantments tried
In fancy, puts them soberly aside
For truth, projects a cool return with friends,
The likelihood of winning mere amends
Ere long; thinks that, takes comfort silently,
Then, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he,
Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon
Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon.
 Midnight: the watcher nodded on his spear,
Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear
For any meagre and discolored moon
To venture forth; and such was peering soon
Above the harassed city — her close lanes
Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,
As though she shrunk into herself to keep
What little life was saved, more safely. Heap
By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside

The blackest spoke Sordello and replied
Palma with none to listen. "'T is your cause:
What makes a Ghibellin? There should be laws —
(Remember how my youth escaped! I trust
To you for manhood, Palma! tell me just
As any child) — there must be laws at work
Explaning this. Assure me, good may lurk
Under the bad, — my multitude has part
In your designs their welfare is at heart
With Salinguerra, to their interest
Refer the deeds he dwelt on, — so divest
Our conference of much that scared me. Why
Affect that heartless tone to Tito? I
Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind
This morn, a recreant to my race — mankind
O'erlooked till now: why boast my spirit's force,
— Such force denied its object? why divorce
These, then admire my spirit's flight the same
As though it bore up, helped some half-orbed flame
Else quenched in the dead void, to living space?
That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace,
Why vaunt so much my unencumbered dance,
Making a feat's facilities enhance
Its marvel? But I front Taurello, one
Of happier fate, and all I should have done,
He does; the people's good being paramount
With him, their progress may perhaps account
For his abiding still; whereas you heard
The talk with Tito — the excuse preferred
For burning those five hostages, — and broached
By way of blind, as you and I approached,
I do believe."
She spoke: then he, "My thought
Plainlier expressed! All to your profit — naught
Meantime of these, of conquests to achieve

For them, of wretchedness he might relieve
While profiting your party. Azzo, too,
Supports a cause: what cause? Do Guelfs pursue
Their ends by means like yours, or better?"
When
The Guelfs were proved alike, men weighed with men,
And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with blood and blaze,
Morn broke: "Once more, Sordello, meet its gaze
Proudly — the people's charge against thee fails
In every point, while either party quails!
These are the busy ones: be silent thou!
Two parties take the world up, and allow
No third, yet have one principle, subsist
By the same injustice; whoso shall enlist
With either, ranks with man's inveterate foes.
So there is one less quarrel to compose:
The Guelf, the Ghibellin may be to curse —
I have done nothing, but both sides do worse
Than nothing. Nay, to me, forgotten, reft
Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left
The notion of a service — ha? What lured
Me here, what mighty aim was I assured
Must move Taurello? What if there remained
A cause, intact, distinct from these, ordained
For me, its true discoverer?"
Some one pressed
Before them here, a watcher, to suggest
The subject for a ballad: "They must know
The tale of the dead worthy, long ago
Consul of Rome — that 's long ago for us,
Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus
In the world's corner — but too late, no doubt,
For the brave time he sought to bring about.

— Not know Crescentius Nomentanus?" Then
He cast about for terms to tell him, when
Sordello disavowed it, how they used
Whenever their Superior introduced
A novice to the Brotherhood — ("for I
Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
Appointed too," quoth he, "till Innocent
Bade me relinquish, to my small content,
My wife or my brown sleeves") — some brother spoke
Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke
The edict issued, after his demise,
Which blotted fame alike and effigies,
All out except a floating power, a name
Including, tending to produce the same
Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least
Within that brain, though to a vulgar priest
And a vile stranger, — two not worth a slave
Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho, — fortune gave
The rule there: so, Crescentius, haply dressed
In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,
Taking the people at their word, forth stepped
As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept
Rome waiting, — stood erect, and from his brain
Gave Rome out on its ancient place again,
Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome, Kings styled
Themselves mere citizens of, and, beguiled
Into great thoughts thereby, would choose the gem
Out of a lapfull, spoil their diadem
— The Senate 's cypher was so hard to scratch!
He flashes like a phanal, all men catch
The flame, Rome 's just accomplished! when return
Otho, with John, the Consul's step had spurned,
And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress
The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress

Of adverse fortune bent. "They crucified
Their Consul in the Forum; and abide
E'er since such slaves at Rome, that I — (for I
Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
Appointed) — I had option to keep wife
Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife
Lose both. A song of Rome!"
And Rome, indeed,
Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,
The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,
Looked an established point of light whence rays
Traversed the world; for, all the clustered homes
Beside of men, seemed bent on being Romes
In their degree; the question was, how each
Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach.
Nor, of the Two, did either principle
Struggle to change, but to possess Rome, — still
Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.
Let Rome advance!
Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignorance —
How could he doubt one moment? Rome 's the
Cause!
Rome of the Pandects, all the world's new laws —
Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo;
New structures, that inordinately glow,
Subdued, brought back to harmony, made ripe
By many a relic of the archetype
Extant for wonder; every upstart church
That hoped to leave old temples in the lurch,
Corrected by the Theatre forlorn
That, — as a mundane shell, its world late born, —
Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints combined,
Rome typifies the scheme to put mankind
Once more in full possession of their rights.
"Let us have Rome again! On me it lights

To build up Rome — on me, the first and last:
For such a future was endured the past!"
And thus, in the gray twilight, forth he sprung
To give his thought consistency among
The very People — let their facts avail
Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.

BOOK THE FIFTH

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk
As at the dawn? — merely a perished husk
Now, that arose a power fit to build
Up Rome again? The proud conception chilled
So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine
— A Rome indebted to no Palatine —
Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art possessed
Of thy wish now, rewarded for thy quest
To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons?
Are this and this and this the shining ones
Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say,
Your favored tenantry pursue their way
After a fashion! This companion slips
On the smooth causey, t' other blinkard trips
At his mooned sandal. "Leave to lead the brawls
Here i' the atria?" No, friend! He that sprawls
On aught but a stibadium . . . what his dues
Who puts the lustral vase to such an use?
Oh, huddle up the day's disasters! March,
Ye runagates, and drop thou arch by arch,
Rome!
Yet before they quite disband — a whim —
Study mere shelter, now, for him, and him,
Nay, even the worst, — just house them! Any cave
Suffices: throw out earth! A loophole? Brave!

They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass
Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas,
And I am dead! But here 's our son excels
At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells
Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes
His dream into a door-post, just escapes
The mystery of hinges. Lie we both
Perdue another age. The goodly growth
Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt was rough,
But that descendant's garb suits well enough
A portico-contriver. Speed the years —
What 's time to us? At last, a city rears
Itself! nay, enter — what 's the grave to us?
Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus
The head! Successively sewer, forum, cirque —
Last age, an aqueduct was counted work,
But now they tire the artificer upon
Blank alabaster, black obsidion,
— Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgurant,
And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples pant
Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed
Above the baths. What difference betwixt
This Rome and ours — resemblance what, between
That scurvy dumb-show and this pageant sheen —
These Romans and our rabble? Use thy wit!
The work marched: step by step, — a workman fit
Took each, nor too fit, — to one task, one time, —
No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,
When just the substituting osier lithe
For brittle bulrush, sound wood for soft withe,
To further loam-and-roughcast-work a stage, —
Exacts an architect, exacts an age
No tables of the Mauritanian tree
For men whose maple log 's their luxury!

That way was Rome built. "Better" (say you) "merge
At once all workmen in the demiurge,
All epochs in a lifetime, every task
In one!" So should the sudden city bask
I' the day — while those we 'd feast there, want the knack
Of keeping fresh-chaiked gowns from speck and brack,
Distinguish not rare peacock from vile swan,
Nor Mareotic juice from Cæcuban.
"Enough of Rome! 'T was happy to conceive
Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave
Me of that credit: for the rest, her spite
Is an old story — serves my folly right
By adding yet another to the dull
List of abortions — things proved beautiful
Could they be done, Sordello cannot do."
He sat upon the terrace, plucked and threw
The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift
Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch, and drift
Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,
Mounds of all majesty. "Thou archetype,
Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!"
And then a low voice wound into his heart:
"Sordello!" (low as some old Pythoness
Conceding to a Lydian King's distress
The cause of his long error — one mistake
Of her past oracle) "Sordello, wake!
God has conceded two sights to a man —
One, of men's whole work, time's completed plan
The other, of the minute's work, man's first
Step to the plan's completeness: what 's dispersed
Save hope of that supreme step which, descried
Earliest, was meant still to remain untried

Only to give you heart to take your own
Step, and there stay, leaving the rest alone?
Where is the vanity? Why count as one
The first step, with the last step? What is gone
Except Rome's aëry magnificence,
That last step you 'd take first? — an evidence
You were God: be man now! Let those glances fall!
The basis, the beginning step of all,
Which proves you just a man — is that gone too?
Pity to disconcert one versed as you
In fate's ill-nature! but its full extent
Eludes Sordello, even: the veil rent,
Read the black writing — that collective man
Outstrips the individual. Who began
The acknowledged greatnesses? Ay, your own art
Shall serve us: put the poet's mimes apart —
Close with the poet's self, and lo, a dim
Yet too plain form divides itself from him!
Alcamo's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,
Woven into the echoes left erewhile
By Nina, one soft web of song: no more
Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er and o'er!
An elder poet in the younger's place;
Nina's the strength, but Alcamo's the grace:
Each neutralizes each then! Search your fill;
You get no whole and perfect Poet — still
New Ninas, Alcamos, till time's mid-night
Shrouds all — or better say, the shutting light
Of a forgotten yesterday. Dissect
Every ideal workman — (to reject
In favor of your fearful ignorance
The thousand phantasms eager to advance,
And point you but to those within your reach) —
Were you the first who brought — (in modern speech)
The Multitude to be materialized?

That loose eternal unrest — who devised
An apparition i' the midst? The rout
Was checked, a breathless ring was formed about
That sudden flower: get round at any risk
The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk
O' the lily! Swords across it! Reign thy reign
And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne!
— The very child of over-joyousness,
Unfeeling thence, strong therefore: Strength by stress
Of Strength comes of that forehead confident,
Those widened eyes expecting heart's content.
A calm as out of just-quelled noise; nor swerves
For doubt, the ample cheek in gracious curves
Abutting on the upthrust nether lip:
He wills, how should he doubt then? Ages slip:
Was it Sordello pried into the work
So far accomplished, and discovered lurk
A company amid the other clans,
Only distinct in priests for castellan.
And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed
Its rule, their interest its interest,
Living for sake of living — there an end —
Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend
In making adversaries or allies) —
Dived you into its capabilities
And dared create, out of that sect, a soul
Should turn a multitude, already whole,
Into its body? Speak plainer! Is 't so sure
God's church lives by a King's investiture?
Look to last step! A staggering — a shock —
What 's mere sand is demolished, while the rock
Endures: a column of black fiery dust
Blots heaven — that help was prematurely thrust
Aside, perchance! — but air clears, naught 's erased

Of the true outline. Thus much being firm based,
The other was a scaffold. See him stand
Buttressed upon his mattock, Hildebrand
Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er ply
As in a forge; it buries either eye
White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth clenched,
The neck tight-corded, too, the chin deep-trenched,
As if a cloud enveloped him while fought
Under its shade, grim prizers, thought with thought
At dead-lock, agonizing he, until
The victor thought leap radiant up, and Will,
The slave with folded arms and drooping lids
They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids.
Call him no flower — a mandrake of the earth,
Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth,
Rather, — a fruit of suffering's excess,
Thence feeling, therefore stronger: still by stress
Of Strength, work Knowledge! Full three hundred years
Have men to wear away in smiles and tears
Between the two that nearly seemed to touch,
Observe you! quit one workman and you clutch
Another, letting both their trains go by —
The actors-out of either's policy,
Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,
Carry the three Imperial crowns across,
Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold —
While Alexander, Innocent uphold
On that, each Papal key — but, link on link,
Why is it neither chain betrays a chink?
How coalesce the small and great? Alack,
For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back!
Do the popes coupled there help Gregory
Alone? Hark — from the hermit Peter's cry
At Claremont, down to the first serf that says

Friedrich 's no liege of his while he delays
Getting the Pope's curse off him! The Crusade —
Or trick of breeding Strength by other aid
Than Strength, is safe. Hark — from the wild harangue
Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang
Yonder! The League — or trick of turning Strength
Against Pernicious Strength, is safe at length.
Yet hark — from Mantuan Albert making cease
The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace
Yonder! God's Truce — or trick to supersede
The very Use of Strength, is safe. Indeed
We trench upon the future. Who is found
To take next step, next age — trail o'er the ground —
Shall I say, gourd-like? — not the flower's display
Nor the root's prowess, but the plenteous way
O' the plant — produced by joy and sorrow, whence
Unfeeling and yet feeling strongest thence?
Knowledge by stress of merely Knowledge? No —
E'en were Sordello ready to forego
His life for this, 't were overleaping work
Some one has first to do, howe'er it irk,
Nor stray a foot's breadth from the beaten road.
Who means to help must still support the load
Hildebrand lifted — 'why hast Thou,' he groaned,
'Imposed on me a burthen, Paul had moaned,
And Moses dropped beneath?' Much done — and yet
Doubtless that grandest task God ever set
On man, left much to do: at his arm's wrench,
Charlemagne's scaffold fell; but pillars blench
Merely, start back again — perchance have been
Taken for buttresses: crash every screen,
Hammer the tenons better, and engage
A gang about your work, for the next age

Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part
By Knowledge! Then, indeed, perchance may start
Sordello on his race — would time divulge
Such secrets! If one step 's awry, one bulge
Calls for correction by a step we thought
Got over long since, why, till that is wrought,
No progress! And the scaffold in its turn
Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn.
Meanwhile, if your half-dozen years of life
In store dispose you to forego the strife,
Who takes exception? Only bear in mind
Ferrara 's reached, Goito 's left behind:
As you then were, as half yourself, desist!
— The warrior-part of you may, an it list,
Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,
Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys
By wielding such in fancy, — what is bard
Of you may spurn the vehicle that marred
Elys so much, and in free fancy glut
His sense, yet write no verses — you have but
To please yourself for law, and once could please
What once appeared yourself, by dreaming these
Rather than doing these, in days gone by.
But all is changed the moment you descry
Mankind as half yourself, — then, fancy's trade
Ends once and always: how may half evade
The other half? men are found half of you.
Out of a thousand helps, just one or two
Can be accomplished presently: but flinch
From these (as from the faulchion, raised an inch,
Elys, described a couplet) and make proof
Of fancy, — then, while one half lolls aloof
I' the vines, completing Rome to the tip-top —
See if, for that, your other half will stop
A tear, begin a smile! The rabble's woes,

Ludicrous in their patience as they chose
To sit about their town and quietly
Be slaughtered, — the poor reckless soldiery,
With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how
'Polt-foot,' sang they, 'was in a pitfall now,'
Cheering each other from the engine-mounts, —
That crippled spawling idiot who recounts
How, lopped of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,
Till the pains crept from out him one by one,
And wriggles round the archers on his head
To earn a morsel of their chestnut bread, —
And Cino, always in the self-same place
Weeping; beside that other wretch's case,
Eyepits to ear, one gangrene since he plied
The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide
A double watch in the noon sun; and see
Lucchino, beauty, with the favors free,
Trim hacqueton, spruce beard and scented hair,
Campaigning it for the first time — cut there
In two already, boy enough to crawl
For latter orpine round the southern wall,
Tomà, where Richard 's kept, because that whore
Marfisa, the fool never saw before,
Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege:
And Tiso's wife — men liked their pretty liege,
Cared for her least of whims once, — Berta, wed
A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso 's dead,
Delivering herself of his first child
On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled
To fifty gazers!" — (Here a wind below
Made moody music augural of woe
From the pine barrier) — "What if, now the scene
Draws to a close, yourself have really been
— You, plucking purples in Goito's moss
Like edges of a trabea (not to cross

Your consul-humor) or dry aloe-shafts
For fasces, at Ferrara — he, fate wafts,
This very age, her whole inheritance
Of opportunities? Yet you advance
Upon the last! Since talking is your trade,
There 's Salinguerra left you to persuade:
Fail! then" —
"No — no — which latest chance secure!"
Leaped up and cried Sordello: "this made sure
The past were yet redeemable; its work
Was — help the Guelfs, whom I, howe'er it irk,
Thus help!" He shook the foolish aloe-halm
Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm
To the appointed presence. The large head
Turned on its socket; "And your spokesman," said
The large voice, "is Elcorte's happy sprout?
Few such" — (so finishing a speech no doubt
Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)
" — My sober councils have diversified.
Elcorte's son! good: forward as you may,
Our lady's minstrel with so much to say!"
The hesitating sunset floated back,
Rosily traversed in the wonted track
The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth,
Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in earth
Opposite, — outlined sudden, spur to crest,
That solid Salinguerra, and caressed
Palma's contour; 't was day looped back night's pall;
Sordello had a chance left spite of all.
And much he made of the convincing speech
Meant to compensate for the past and reach
Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit, quite
To his noon's labor, so proceed till night
Leisurely! The great argument to bind
Taurello with the Guelf Cause, body and mind,

— Came the consummate rhetoric to that?
Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat
Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke,
Disjoining him who felt from him who spoke.
Was 't not a touching incident — so prompt
A rendering the world its just accompt,
Once proved its debtor? Who 'd suppose, before
This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore,
At duty's instance could demean himself
So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf?
Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,
His inmost self at the out-portion peeped,
Thus occupied; then stole a glance at those
Appealed to, curious if her color rose
Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged
The need of Lombardy becoming purged
At soonest of her barons; the poor part
Abandoned thus, missing the blood at heart
And spirit in brain, unseasonably off
Elsewhere! But, though his speech was worthy scoff,
Good-humored Salinguerra, famed for tact
And tongue, who, careless of his phrase, ne'er lacked
The right phrase, and harangued Honorius dumb
At his accession, — looked as all fell plumb
To purpose and himself found interest
In every point his new instructor pressed
— Left playing with the rescript's white wax seal
To scrutinize Sordello head and heel.
He means to yield assent sure? No, alas!
All he replied was, "What, it comes to pass
That posey, sooner than politics,
Makes fade young hair?" To think such speech could fix
Taurello!
Then a flash of bitter truth:

So fantasies could break and fritter youth
That he had long ago lost earnestness,
Lost will to work, lost power to even express
The need of working! Earth was turned a grave:
No more occasions now, though he should crave
Just one, in right of superhuman toil,
To do what was undone, repair such spoil,
Alter the past — nothing would give the chance!
Not that he was to die; he saw askance
Protract the ignominious years beyond
To dream in — time to hope and time despond,
Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice
As saved a trouble; he might, at his choice,
One way or other, idle life out, drop
No few smooth verses by the way — for prop,
A thyrsus, these sad people, all the same,
Should pick up, and set store by, — far from blame,
Plant o'er his hearse, convinced his better part
Survived him. "Rather tear men out the heart
O' the truth!" — Sordello muttered, and renewed
His propositions for the Multitude.
But Salinguerra, who at this attack
Had thrown great breast and ruffling corslet back
To hear the better, smilingly resumed
His task; beneath, the carroch's warning boomed;
He must decide with Tito; courteously
He turned then, even seeming to agree
With his admonisher — "Assist the Pope,
Extend Guelf domination, fill the scope
O' the Church, thus based on All, by All, for All —
Change Secular to Evangelical" —
Echoing his very sentence: all seemed lost,
When suddenly he looked up, laughingly almost,
To Palma: "This opinion of your friend's —
For instance, would it answer Palma's ends?

Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our Strength"—
(Here he drew out his baldric to its length)
—"To the Pope's Knowledge—let our captive slip,
Wide to the walls throw ope our gates, equip
Azzo with . . . what I hold here! Who 'll subscribe
To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe
Henceforward? or pronounce, as Heinrich used,
'Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for the joust!'
—When Constance, for his couplets, would promote
Alcamo, from a parti-colored coat,
To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.
Not that I see where couplet-making jars
With common sense: at Mantua I had borne
This chanted, better than their most forlorn
Of bull-baits, — that 's indisputable!"
Brave!
Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save!
All 's at an end: a Troubadour suppose
Mankind will class him with their friends or foes?
A puny uncouth ailing vassal think
The world and him bound in some special link?
Abrupt the visionary tether burst.
What were rewarded here, or what amerced
If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream
Deservingly, got tangled by his theme
So far as to conceit the knack or gift
Or whatso'er it be, of verse, might lift
The globe, a lever like the hand and head
Of — "Men of Action," as the Jongleurs said,
— "The Great Men," in the people's dialect?
And not a moment did this scorn affect
Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,
Asking "what was," obtained a full response.
Bid Naddo think at Mantua — he had but

To look into his promptuary, put
Finger on a set thought in a set speech:
But was Sordello fitted thus for each
Conjecture? Nowise; since within his soul,
Perception brooded unexpressed and whole.
A healthy spirit like a healthy frame
Craves aliment in plenty — all the same,
Changes, assimilates its aliment.
Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent?
Next day no formularies more you saw
Than figs or olives in a sated maw.
'T is Knowledge, whither such perceptions tend;
They lose themselves in that, means to an end,
The many old producing some one new,
A last unlike the first. If lies are true,
The Caliph's wheel-work man of brass receives
A meal, munched millet grains and lettuce leaves
Together in his stomach rattle loose;
You find them perfect next day to produce:
But ne'er expect the man, on strength of that,
Can roll an iron camel-collar flat
Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what was stored
Bit by bit through Sordello's life, outpoured
That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing:
And round those three the People formed a ring,
Of visionary judges whose award
He recognized in full — faces that barred
Henceforth return to the old careless life,
In whose great presence, therefore, his first strife
For their sake must not be ignobly fought;
All these, for once, approved of him, he thought,
Suspended their own vengeance, chose await
The issue of this strife to reinstate
Them in the right of taking it — in fact
He must be proved king ere they could exact

Vengeance for such king's defalcation. Last,
A reason why the phrases flowed so fast
Was in his quite forgetting for a time
Himself in his amazement that the rhyme
Disguised the royalty so much: he there —
And Salinguerra yet all-unaware
Who was the lord, who liegeman!
"Thus I lay
On thine my spirit and compel obey
His lord, — my liegeman, — impotent to build
Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled
In what such builder should have been, as brook
One shame beyond the charge that I forsook
His function! Free me from that shame, I bend
A brow before, suppose new years to spend, —
Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly, recur —
Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, demur
At any crowd he claims! That I must cede
Shamed now, my right to my especial meed —
Confess thee fitter help the world than I
Ordained its champion from eternity,
Is much: but to behold thee scorn the post
I quit in thy behalf — to hear thee boast
What makes my own despair!" And while he rung
The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung,
The sad walls of the presence-chamber died
Into the distance, or embowering vied
With far-away Goito's vine-frontier;
And crowds of faces — (only keeping clear
The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground
To fight their battle from) — deep clustered round
Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,
Kind prayers for him no vapor, since, come death
Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint,
Each bone new-marrowed as whom gods anoint

Though mortal to their rescue. Now let sprawl
The snaky volumes hither! Is Typhon all
For Hercules to trample — good report
From Salinguerra only to extort?
"So was I" (closed he his inculcating
A poet must be earth's essential king)
"So was I, royal so, and if I fail,
'T is not the royalty, ye witness quail,
But one deposed who, caring not exert
Its proper essence, trifled malapert
With accidents instead — good things assigned
As heralds of a better thing behind —
And, worthy through display of these, put forth
Never the inmost all-surpassing worth
That constitutes him king precisely since
As yet no other spirit may evince
Its like: the power he took most pride to test,
Whereby all forms of life had been professed
At pleasure, forms already on the earth,
Was but a means to power beyond, whose birth
Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof.
Now, whether he came near or kept aloof
The several forms he longed to imitate,
Not there the kingship lay, he sees too late.
Those forms, unalterable first as last,
Proved him her copier, not the protoplast
Of nature: what would come of being free,
By action to exhibit tree for tree,
Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or prove earth bore
One veritable man or woman more?
Means to an end, such proofs are: what the end?
Let essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend —
Never contract. Already you include
The multitude; then let the multitude
Include yourself; and the result were new:

Themselves before, the multitude turn you.
This were to live and move and have, in them,
Your being, and secure a diadem
You should transmit (because no cycle yearns
Beyond itself, but on itself returns)
When, the full sphere in wane, the world o'erlaid
Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed
Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still
More potent than the last, of human will,
And some new king depose the old. Of such
Am I — whom pride of this elates too much?
Safe, rather say, 'mid troops of peers again;
I, with my words, hailed brother of the train
Deeds once sufficed: for, let the world roll back,
Who fails, through deeds howe'er diverse, retrack
My purpose still, my task? A teeming crust —
Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict! Then, needs must
Emerge some Calm embodied, these refer
The brawl to — yellow-bearded Jupiter?
No! Saturn; some existence like a pact
And protest against Chaos, some first fact
I' the faint of time. My deep of life, I know,
Is unavailing e'en to poorly show" . . .
(For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)
. . . "Deeds in their due gradation till Song dawned —
The fullest effluence of the finest mind,
All in degree, no way diverse in kind
From minds about it, minds which, more or less,
Lofty or low, move seeking to impress
Themselves on somewhat; but one mind has climbed
Step after step, by just ascent sublimed.
Thought is the soul of act, and, stage by stage,
Soul is from body still to disengage
As tending to a freedom which rejects

Such help and incorporeally affects
The world, producing deeds but not by deeds,
Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,
Assigning them the simpler tasks it used
To patiently perform till Song produced
Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind: divest
Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's unexpressed
Will draws above us! All then is to win
Save that. How much for me, then? where begin
My work? About me, faces! and they flock,
The earnest faces. What shall I unlock
By song? behold me prompt, whate'er it be,
To minister: how much can mortals see
Of Life? No more than so? I take the task
And marshal you Life's elemental masque,
Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress,
This light, this shade make prominent, suppress
All ordinary hues that softening blend
Such natures with the level. Apprehend
Which sinner is, which saint, if I allot
Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, a blaze or blot,
To those you doubt concerning! I enwomb
Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot tomb;
Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph
With the black chastening river I engulf!
Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine
With languors of the planet of decline —
These, fail to recognize, to arbitrate
Between henceforth, to rightly estimate
Thus marshalled in the masque! Myself, the while,
As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile
At my own showing! Next age — what 's to do?
The men and women stationed hitherto
Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct
Each nature to its farthest, or obstruct

At soonest, in the world: light, thwarted, breaks
A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,
Or shadow, massed, freezes to gloom: behold
How such, with fit assistance to unfold,
Or obstacles to crush them, disengage
Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make, war wage,
In presence of you all! Myself, implied
Superior now, as, by the platform's side,
I bade them do and suffer, — would last content
The world . . . no — that 's too far! I circumvent
A few, my masque contented, and to these
Offer unveil the last of mysteries —
Man's inmost life shall have yet freer play:
Once more I cast external things away,
And natures composite, so decompose
That" . . . Why, he writes *Sordello!*
"How I rose,
And how have you advanced! since evermore
Yourselves effect what I was fain before
Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,
What I leave bare yourselves can now invest.
How we attain to talk as brothers talk,
In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk
From discontinuing old aids. To-day
Takes in account the work of Yesterday:
Has not the world a Past now, its adept
Consults ere he dispense with or accept
New aids? a single touch more may enhance,
A touch less turn to insignificance
Those structures' symmetry the past has strewed
The world with, once so bare. Leave the mere rude
Explicit details! 't is but brother's speech
We need, speech where an accent's change gives each
The other's soul — no speech to understand

By former audience: need was then to expand,
Expatiate — hardly were we brothers! true —
Nor I lament my small remove from you,
Nor reconstruct what stands already. Ends
Accomplished turn to means; my art intends
New structure from the ancient; as they changed
The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged
The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright
As in his desert, by some simple bright
Clay cinerary pitcher — Thebes as Rome,
Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome
From earth's reputed consummations razed
A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed
Above. Ah, whose that fortune? Ne'ertheless
E'en he must stoop contented to express
No tithe of what 's to say — the vehicle
Never sufficient: but his work is still
For faces like the faces that select
The single service I am bound effect, —
That bid me cast aside such fancies, bow
Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow
The Kaiser's coming — which with heart, soul, strength,
I labor for, this eve, who feel at length
My past career's outrageous vanity,
And would, as its amends, die, even die
Now I first estimate the boon of life,
If death might win compliance — sure, this strife
Is right for once — the People my support."
 My poor Sordello! what may we extort
By this, I wonder? Palma's lighted eyes
Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise,
Began, "You love him — what you 'd say at large
Let me say briefly. First, your father's charge
To me, his friend, peruse: I guessed indeed

You were no stranger to the course decreed.
He bids me leave his children to the saints:
As for a certain project, he acquaints
The Pope with that, and offers him the best
Of your possessions to permit the rest
Go peaceably — to Ecelin, a stripe
Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,
— To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan
Clutches already; extricate, who can,
Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,
Loria and Cartiglione! — all must go,
And with them go my hopes. 'T is lost, then! Lost
This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost
Procuring; thirty years — as good I 'd spent
Like our admonisher! But each his bent
Pursues: no question, one might live absurd
Oneself this while, by deed as he by word
Persisting to obtrude an influence where
'T is made account of, much as . . . nay, you fare
With twice the fortune, youngster! — I submit,
Happy to parallel my waste of wit
With the renowned Sordello's: you decide
A course for me. Romano may abide
Romano, — Bacchus! After all, what dearth
Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth?
Say there 's a prize in prospect, must disgrace
Betide competitors, unless they style
Themselves Romano? Were it worth my while
To try my own luck! But an obscure place
Suits me — there wants a youth to bustle, stalk
And attitudinize — some fight, more talk,
Most flaunting badges — how, I might make clear
Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here
— Here, pity they are like to lie! For me,
With station fixed unceremoniously

Long since, small use contesting; I am but
The liegeman — you are born the lieges: shut
That gentle mouth now! or resume your kin
In your sweet self; were Palma Ecelin
For me to work with! Could that neck endure
This bauble for a cumbrous garniture,
She should . . . or might one bear it for her? Stay—
I have not been so flattered many a day
As by your pale friend — Bacchus! The least help
Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's whelp:
His neck is broad enough — a ready tongue
Beside: too writhled — but, the main thing, young—
I could . . . why, look ye!"
And the badge was thrown
Across Sordello's neck: "This badge alone
Makes you Romano's Head — becomes superb
On your bare neck, which would, on mine, disturb
The pauldron," said Taurello. A mad act,
Nor even dreamed about before — in fact,
Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce —
But he had dallied overmuch, this once,
With power: the thing was done, and he, aware
The thing was done, proceeded to declare —
(So like a nature made to serve, excel
In serving, only feel by service well!)
— That he would make Sordello that and more.
"As good a scheme as any. What 's to pore
At in my face?" he asked — "ponder instead
This piece of news; you are Romano's Head!
One cannot slacken pace so near the goal,
Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole
This time! For you there 's Palma to espouse —
For me, one crowning trouble ere I house
Like my compeer."
On which ensued a strange

And solemn visitation; there came change
O'er every one of them; each looked on each:
Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech.
And when the giddiness sank and the haze
Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,
Sordello with the baldric on, his sire
Silent, though his proportions seemed aspire
Momently; and, interpreting the thrill, -
Night at its ebb, — Palma was found there still
Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed
A year ago, while dying on her breast, —
Of a contrivance, that Vicenza night
When Ecelin had birth. "Their convoy's flight,
Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame
That wallowed like a dragon at his game
The toppling city through — San Biagio rocks!
And wounded lies in her delicious locks
Retrude, the frail mother, on her face,
None of her wasted, just in one embrace
Covering her child: when, as they lifted her,
Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier
And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke,
Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke,
Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward — drown
His colleague Ecelin's clamor, up and down
The disarray: failed Adelaide see then
Who was the natural chief, the man of men?
Outstripping time, her infant there burst swathe,
Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the scathe
From wandering after his heritage
Lost once and lost for aye: and why that rage,
That deprecating glance? A new shape leant
On a familiar shape — gloatingly bent
O'er his discomfiture; 'mid wreaths it wore,
Still one outflamed the rest — her child's before

'T was Salinguerra's for his child: scorn, hate,
Rage now might startle her when all too late!
Then was the moment! — rival's foot had spurned
Never that House to earth else! Sense returned —
The act conceived, adventured and complete,
They bore away to an obscure retreat
Mother and child — Retrude's self not slain"
(Nor even here Taurello moved) "though pain
Was fled; and what assure them most 't was fled,
All pain, was, if they raised the pale hushed head
'T would turn this way and that, waver awhile,
And only settle into its old smile —
(Graceful as the disquieted water-flag
Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag
On either side their path) — when suffered look
Down on her child. They marched: no sign once shook
The company's close litter of crossed spears
Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears
Slipped in the sunset from her long black lash,
And she was gone. So far the action rash;
No crime. They laid Retrude in the font,
Taurello's very gift, her child was wont
To sit beneath — constant as eve he came
To sit by its attendant girls the same
As one of them. For Palma, she would blend
With this magnific spirit to the end,
That ruled her first; but scarcely had she dared
To disobey the Adelaide who scared
Her into vowing never to disclose
A secret to her husband, which so froze
His blood at half-recital, she contrived
To hide from him Taurello's infant lived,
Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar
Romano's fortunes. And, a crime so far,

Palma received that action: she was told
Of Salinguerra's nature, of his cold
Calm acquiescence in his lot! But free
To impart the secret to Romano, she
Engaged to repossess Sordello of
His heritage, and hers, and that way doff
The mask, but after years, long years: while now,
Was not Romano's sign-mark on that brow?"
 Across Taurello's heart his arms were locked:
And when he did speak 't was as if he mocked
The minstrel, "who had not to move," he said,
"Nor stir — should fate defraud him of a shred
Of his son's infancy? much less his youth!"
(Laughingly all this) — "which to aid, in truth,
Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown
Old, not too old — 't was best they kept alone
Till now, and never idly met till now;"
— Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how
All intimations of this eve's event
Were lies, for Friedrich must advance to Trent,
Thence to Verona, then to Rome, there stop,
Tumble the Church down, institute a-top
The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy:
— "That 's now! — no prophesying what may be
Anon, with a new monarch of the clime,
Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime
At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide
On whom . . ."
 "Embrace him, madman!" Palma cried,
Who through the laugh saw sweat-drops burst apace,
And his lips blanching: he did not embrace
Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand
On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.
 Understand,
This while Sordello was becoming flushed

Out of his whiteness; thoughts rushed, fancies rushed;
He pressed his hand upon his head and signed
Both should forbear him. "Nay, the best 's behind!"
Taurello laughed — not quite with the same laugh:
"The truth is, thus we scatter, ay, like chaff
These Guelfs, a despicable monk recoils
From: nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils
Our triumph! — Friedrich? Think you, I intend
Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I spend
And brain I waste? Think you, the people clap
Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap
For any Friedrich to fill up? 'T is mine —
That 's yours: I tell you, towards some such design
Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,
And for another, yes — but worked no less
With instinct at my heart; I else had swerved,
While now — look round! My cunning has preserved
Samminiato — that 's a central place
Secures us Florence, boy, — in Pisa's case.
By land as she by sea; with Pisa ours,
And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours
The land at leisure! Gloriously dispersed —
Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first
That flanked us (ah, you know not!) in the March;
On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,
Romagna and Bologna, whose first span
Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan;
Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure!" . . .
So he proceeded: half of all this, pure
Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,
But what was undone he felt sure to do,
As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away
The pauldron-rings to give his word-arm play —
Need of the sword now! That would soon adjust
Aught wrong at present; to the sword intrust

Sordello's whiteness, undersize: 't was plain
He hardly rendered right to his own brain —
Like a brave hound, men educate to pride
Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,
As though he could not, gift by gift, match men!
Palma had listened patiently: but when
'T was time expostulate, attempt withdraw
Taurello from his child, she, without awe,
Took off his iron arms from, one by one,
Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done,
Made him avert his visage and relieve
Sordello (you might see his corslet heave
The while) who, loose, rose — tried to speak, then sank:
They left him in the chamber. All was blank.
And even reeling down the narrow stair
Taurello kept up, as though unaware
Palma was by to guide him, the old device
— Something of Milan — "how we muster thrice
The Torriani's strength there; all along
Our own Visconti cowed them" — thus the song
Continued even while she bade him stoop,
Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop
The turnings to the gallery below,
Where he stopped short as Palma let him go.
When he had sat in silence long enough
Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff
She stopped the truncheon; only to commence
One of Sordello's poems, a pretence
For speaking, some poor rhyme of "Elys' hair
And head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear,
So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks
Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks
Sun-blanched the livelong summer" — from his worst

Performance, the Goito, as his first:
And that at end, conceiving from the brow
And open mouth no silence would serve now,
Went on to say the whole world loved that man
And, for that matter, thought his face, tho' wan,
Eclipsed the Count's — he sucking in each phrase
As if an angel spoke. The foolish praise
Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made
Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,
A crown, an aureole: there must she remain
(Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain
As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)
To get the best look at, in fittest niche
Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed her brow,
— "Lauded her father for his treason now,"
He told her, "only, how could one suspect
The wit in him? — whose clansman, recollect,
Was ever Salinguerra — she, the same,
Romano and his lady — so, might claim
To know all, as she should" — and thus begun
Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes,
"not one
Fit to be told that foolish boy," he said,
"But only let Sordello Palma wed,
— Then!"
'T was a dim long narrow place at best:
Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West,
As shows its corpse the world's end some split tomb —
A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom,
Faced Palma — but at length Taurello set
Her free; the grating held one ragged jet
Of fierce gold fire: he lifted her within
The hollow underneath — how else begin
Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew
The ages than with Palma plain in view?

Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head erect,
Pursuing this discourse; a grand unchecked
Monotony made out from his quick talk
And the recurring noises of his walk;
— Somewhat too much like the o'ercharged assent
Of two resolved friends in one danger blent,
Who hearten each the other against heart;
Boasting there 's naught to care for, when, apart
The boaster, all 's to care for. He, beside
Some shape not visible, in power and pride
Approached, out of the dark, ginglingly near,
Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear
Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-fraught,
Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,
And on he strode into the opposite dark,
Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark
I' the stone, and whirl of some loose embossed thong
That crashed against the angle aye so long
After the last, punctual to an amount
Of mailed great paces you could not but count, —
Prepared you for the pacing back again.
And by the snatches you might ascertain
That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left
By this alone in Italy, they cleft
Asunder, crushed together, at command
Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,
Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne —
But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, "if we deign
Accept that compromise and stoop to give
Rome law, the Cæsar's Representative."
Enough, that the illimitable flood
Of triumphs after triumphs, understood
In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed
Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed

Him on till, these long quiet in their graves,
He found 't was looked for that a whole life's braves
Should somehow be made good; so, weak and worn,
Must stagger up at Milan, one gray morn
Of the to-come, and fight his latest fight.
But, Salinguerra's prophecy at height —
He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,
A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if
He had our very Italy to keep
Or cast away, or gather in a heap
To garrison the better — ay, his word
Was, "run the cucumber into a gourd,
Drive Trent upon Apulia" — at their pitch
Who spied the continents and islands which
Grew mulberry leaves and sickles, in the map —
(Strange that three such confessions so should hap
To Palma, Dante spoke with in the clear
Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere, —
Cunizza, as he called her! Never ask
Of Palma more! She sat, knowing her task
Was done, the labor of it, — for, success
Concerned not Palma, passion's votaress.)
Triumph at height, and thus Sordello crowned —
Above the passage suddenly a sound
Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks Taurello, bids
With large involuntary asking lids,
Palma interpret. "'T is his own foot-stamp —
Your hand! His summons! Nay, this idle damp
Befits not!" Out they two reeled dizzily.
"Visconti 's strong at Milan," resumed he,
In the old, somewhat insignificant way —
(Was Palma wont, years afterward, to say)
As though the spirit's flight, sustained thus far,
Dropped at that very instant.

Gone they are —
Palma, Taurello; Eglamor anon,
Ecelin, — only Naddo 's never gone!
— Labors, this moonrise, what the Master meant:
"Is Squar cialupo speckled? — purulent,
I 'd say, but when was Providence put out?
He carries somehow handily about
His spite nor fouls himself!" Goito's vines
Stand like a cheat detected — stark rough lines,
The moon breaks through, a gray mean scale against
The vault where, this eve's Maiden, thou remain'st
Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed — who can tell?
As Heaven, now all 's at end, did not so well,
Spite of the faith and victory, to leave
Its virgin quite to death in the long eve.
While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha! wait
No longer: these in compass, forward fate!

BOOK THE SIXTH

The thought of Eglamor's least like a thought,
And yet a false one, was, "Man shrinks to naught
If matched with symbols of immensity;
Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky
Or sea, too little for their quietude:"
And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood
Confirmed its speciousness, while eve slow sank
Down the near terrace to the farther bank,
And only one spot left from out the night
Glimmered upon the river opposite —
A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray,
And star for star, one richness where they mixed
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,

Tumultuary splendors folded in
To die. Nor turned he till Ferrara's din
(Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip
Who lets some first and eager purpose slip
In a new fancy's birth — the speech keeps on
Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone)
— Aroused him, surely offered succor. Fate
Paused with this eve; ere she precipitate
Herself, — best put off new strange thoughts awhile,
That voice, those large hands, that portentous smile, —
What help to pierce the future as the past
Lay in the plaining city?
And at last
The main discovery and prime concern,
All that just now imported him to learn,
Truth's self, like yonder slow moon to complete
Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his feet
Lighted his old life's every shift and change,
Effort with counter-effort; nor the range
Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked,
Some other — which of these could he suspect,
Prying into them by the sudden blaze?
The real way seemed made up of all the ways —
Mood after mood of the one mind in him;
Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,
Of a transcendent all-embracing sense
Demanding only outward influence,
A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,
Power to uplift his power, — such moon's control
Over such sea-depths, — and their mass had swept
Onward from the beginning and still kept
Its course: but years and years the sky above
Held none, and so, untasked of any love,
His sensitiveness idled, now amort,

Alive now, and, to sullenness or sport
Given wholly up, disposed itself anew
At every passing instigation, grew
And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers spilt,
Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt
Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race
Of whitest ripples o'er the reef — found place
For much display; not gathered up and, hurled
Right from its heart, encompassing the world.
So had Sordello been, by consequence,
Without a function: others made pretence
To strength not half his own, yet had some core
Within, submitted to some moon, before
Them still, superior still whate'er their force, —
Were able therefore to fulfil a course,
Nor missed life's crown, authentic attribute.
To each who lives must be a certain fruit
Of having lived in his degree, — a stage,
Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,
To stop at; and to this the spirits tend
Who, still discovering beauty without end,
Amass the scintillations, make one star
— Something unlike them, self-sustained, afar, —
And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest
By winning it to notice and invest
Their souls with alien glory, some one day
Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape alway,
Round to the perfect circle — soon or late,
According as themselves are formed to wait;
Whether mere human beauty will suffice
— The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,
Or human intellect seem best, or each
Combine in some ideal form past reach
On earth, or else some shade of these, some aim,
Some love, hate even, take their place, the same,

So to be served — all this they do not lose,
Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose
What must be Hell — a progress thus pursued
Through all existence, still above the food
That 's offered them, still fain to reach beyond
The widened range, in virtue of their bond
Of sovereignty. Not that a Palma's Love,
A Salinguerra's Hate, would equal prove
To swaying all Sordello: but why doubt
Some love meet for such strength, some moon without
Would match his sea? — or fear, Good manifest,
Only the Best breaks faith? — Ah but the Best
Somehow eludes us ever, still might be
And is not! Crave we gems? No penury
Of their material round us! Pliant earth
And plastic flame — what balks the mage his birth
— Jacinth in balls or lodestone by the block?
Flinders enrich the strand, veins swell the rock;
Naught more! Seek creatures? Life 's i' the tempest, thought
Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods are fraught
With fervors: human forms are well enough!
But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff
Profuse at nature's pleasure, men beyond
These actual men! — and thus are over-fond
In arguing, from Good — the Best, from force
Divided — force combined, an ocean's course
From this our sea whose mere intestine pants
Might seem at times sufficient to our wants.
External power! If none be adequate,
And he stand forth ordained (a prouder fate)
Himself a law to his own sphere? "Remove
All incompleteness!" for that law, that love?
Nay, if all other laws be feints, — truth veiled

Helpfully to weak vision that had failed
To grasp aught but its special want, — for lure,
Embodied? Stronger vision could endure
The unbodied want: no part — the whole of truth!
The People were himself: nor, by the ruth
At their condition, was he less impelled
To alter the discrepancy beheld,
Than if, from the sound whole, a sickly part
Subtracted were transformed, decked out with art,
Then palmed on him as alien woe — the Guelf
To succor, proud that he forsook himself.
All is himself; all service, therefore, rates
Alike, nor serving one part, immolates
The rest: but all in time! "That lance of yours
Makes havoc soon with Malek and his Moors,
That buckler 's lined with many a giant's beard
Ere long, our champion, be the lance upreared,
The buckler wielded handsomely as now!
But view your escort, bear in mind your vow,
Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere that,
And, if you hope we struggle through the flat,
Put lance and buckler by! Next half-month lacks
Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe
To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-pear
Which bristling holds Cydippe by the hair,
Lames barefoot Agathon: this felled, we 'll try
The picturesque achievements by and by —
Next life!"
"Ay, rally, mock, O People, urge
Your claims! — for thus he ventured, to the verge,
Push a vain mummery which perchance distrust
Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust
Likewise: accordingly the Crowd — (as yet
He had unconsciously contrived forget

I' the whole, to dwell o' the points . . . one might assuage
The signal horrors easier than engage
With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief
Not to be fancied off, nor gained relief
In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,
But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work
To correspond . . .) this Crowd then, forth they stood.
"And now content thy stronger vision, brood
On thy bare want; uncovered, turf by turf,
Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-worms' scurf!"
Down sank the People's Then; uprose their Now.
These sad ones render service to! And how
Piteously little must that service prove
— Had surely proved in any case! for, move
Each other obstacle away, let youth
Become aware it had surprised a truth
'T were service to impart — can truth be seized,
Settled forthwith, and, of the captive eased,
Its captor find fresh prey, since this alit
So happily, no gesture luring it,
The earnest of a flock to follow? Vain,
Most vain! a life to spend ere this he chain
To the poor crowd's complacence: ere the crowd
Pronounce it captured, he descries a cloud
Its kin of twice the plume; which he, in turn,
If he shall live as many lives, may learn
How to secure: not else. Then Mantua called
Back to his mind how certain bards were thralled
— Buds blasted, but of breath more like perfume
Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion bloom;
Some insane rose that burnt heart out in sweets,
A spendthrift in the spring, no summer greets;
Some Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,

Grown bestial, dreaming how become divine.
Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence
With the commencement, merits crowning! Hence
Must truth be casual truth, elicited
In sparks so mean, at intervals dispread
So rarely, that 't is like at no one time
Of the world's story has not truth, the prime
Of truth, the very truth which, loosed, had hurled
The world's course right, been really in the world
— Content the while with some mean spark by dint
Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint
Of buried fire, which, rip earth's breast, would stream
Sky-ward!
Sordello's miserable gleam
Was looked for at the moment: he would dash
This badge, and all it brought, to earth, — abash
Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest
The Kaiser from his purpose, — would attest
His own belief, in any case. Before
He dashes it however, think once more!
For, were that little, truly service? "Ay,
I' the end, no doubt; but meantime? Plain you spy
Its ultimate effect, but many flaws
Of vision blur each intervening cause.
Were the day's fraction clear as the life's sum
Of service, Now as filled as teems To-come
With evidence of good — nor too minute
A share to vie with evil! No dispute,
'T were fitliest maintain the Guelfs in rule:
That makes your life's work: but you have to school
Your day's work on these natures circumstanced
Thus variously, which yet, as each advanced
Or might impede the Guelf rule, must be moved
Now, for the Then's sake, — hating what you loved,

Loving old hatreds! Nor if one man bore
Brand upon temples while his fellow wore
The aureole, would it task you to decide:
But, portioned duly out, the future vied
Never with the unparcelled present! Smite
Or spare so much on warrant all so slight?
The present's complete sympathies to break,
Aversions bear with, for a future's sake
So feeble? Tito ruined through one speck,
The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck?
This were work, true, but work performed at cost
Of other work; aught gained here, elsewhere lost.
For a new segment spoil an orb half-done?
Rise with the People one step, and sink — one?
Were it but one step, less than the whole face
Of things, your novel duty bids erase!
Harms to abolish! What, the prophet saith,
The minstrel singeth vainly then? Old faith,
Old courage, only born because of harms,
Were not, from highest to the lowest, charms?
Flame may persist; but is not glare as stanch?
Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals branch;
Blood dries to crimson; Evil 's beautified
In every shape. Thrust Beauty then aside
And banish Evil! Wherefore? After all,
Is Evil a result less natural
Than Good? For overlook the seasons' strife
With tree and flower, — the hideous animal life,
(Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt
For his solution, and endure the vaunt
Of nature's angel, as a child that knows
Himself befooled, unable to propose
Aught better than the fooling) — and but care
For men, for the mere People then and there, —
In these, could you but see that Good and Ill

Claimed you alike! Whence rose their claim but still
From Ill, as fruit of Ill? What else could knit
You theirs but Sorrow? Any free from it
Were also free from you! Whose happiness
Could be distinguished in this morning's press
Of miseries? — the fool's who passed a gibe
'On thee,' jeered he, 'so wedded to thy tribe,
Thou carriest green and yellow tokens in
Thy very face that thou art Ghibellin!'
Much hold on you that fool obtained! Nay mount
Yet higher — and upon men's own account
Must Evil stay: for, what is joy? — to heave
Up one obstruction more, and common leave
What was peculiar, by such act destroy
Itself; a partial death is every joy;
The sensible escape, enfranchisement
Of a sphere's essence: once the vexed — content,
The cramped — at large, the growing circle — round,
All 's to begin again — some novel bound
To break, some new enlargement to entreat;
The sphere though larger is not more complete.
Now for Mankind's experience: who alone
Might style the unobstructed world his own?
Whom palled Goito with its perfect things?
Sordello's self: whereas for Mankind springs
Salvation by each hindrance interposed.
They climb; life's view is not at once disclosed
To creatures caught up, on the summit left,
Heaven plain above them, yet of wings bereft:
But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot.
So, range on range, the girdling forests shoot
'Twixt your plain prospect and the throngs who scale
Height after height, and pierce mists, veil by veil,
Heartened with each discovery; in their soul,

The Whole they seek by Parts — but, found that Whole,
Could they revert, enjoy past gains? The space
Of time you judge so meagre to embrace
The Parts were more than plenty, once attained
The Whole, to quite exhaust it: naught were gained
But leave to look — not leave to do: Beneath
Soon sates the looker — look Above, and Death
Tempts ere a tithe of Life be tasted. Live
First, and die soon enough, Sordello! Give
Body and spirit the first right they claim,
And pasture soul on a voluptuous shame
That you, a pageant-city's denizen,
Are neither vilely lodged midst Lombard men —
Can force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck
Bright attributes away for sordid muck,
Yet manage from that very much educe
Gold; then subject, nor scruple, to your cruce
The world's discardings! Though real ingots pay
Your pains, the clods that yielded them are clay
To all beside, — would clay remain, though quenched
Your purging-fire; who 's robbed then? Had you wrenched
An ampler treasure forth! — As 't is, they crave
A share that ruins you and will not save
Them. Why should sympathy command you quit
The course that makes your joy, nor will remit
Their woe? Would all arrive at joy? Reverse
The order (time instructs you) nor coerce
Each unit till, some predetermined mode,
The total be emancipate; men's road
Is one, men's times of travel many; thwart
No enterprising soul's precocious start
Before the general march! If slow or fast
All straggle up to the same point at last,

Why grudge your having gained, a month ago,
The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in blow,
While they were landlocked? Speed their Then, but how
This badge would suffer you improve your Now!"
His time of action for, against, or with
Our world (I labor to extract the pith
Of this his problem) grew, that even-tide,
Gigantic with its power of joy, beside
The world's eternity of impotence
To profit though at his whole joy's expense.
"Make nothing of my day because so brief?
Rather make more: instead of joy, use grief
Before its novelty have time subside!
Wait not for the late savor, leave untried
Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick squeeze
Vice like a biting spirit from the lees
Of life! Together let wrath, hatred, lust,
All tyrannies in every shape, be thrust
Upon this Now, which time may reason out
As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt;
But long ere then Sordello will have slipt
Away; you teach him at Goito's crypt,
There 's a blank issue to that fiery thrill.
Stirring, the few cope with the many, still:
So much of sand as, quiet, makes a mass
Unable to produce three tufts of grass,
Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void
The whole calm glebe's endeavor: be employed!
And e'en though somewhat smart the Crowd for this,
Contribute each his pang to make your bliss,
'T is but one pang — one blood-drop to the bowl
Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl
At last, stains ruddily the dull red cape,
And, kindling orbs gray as the unripe grape

Before, avails forthwith to disentrance
The portent, soon to lead a mystic dance
Among you! For, who sits alone in Rome?
Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home,
And set me there to live? Oh life, life-breath,
Life-blood, — ere sleep, come travail, life ere death!
This life stream on my soul, direct, oblique,
But always streaming! Hindrances? They pique:
Helps? such . . . but why repeat, my soul o'ertops
Each height, then every depth profoundlier drops?
Enough that I can live, and would live! Wait
For some transcendent life reserved by Fate
To follow this? Oh, never! Fate, I trust
The same, my soul to; for, as who flings dust,
Perchance (so facile was the deed) she chequed
The void with these materials to affect
My soul diversely: these consigned anew
To naught by death, what marvel if she threw
A second and superber spectacle
Before me? What may serve for sun, what still
Wander a moon above me? What else wind
About me like the pleasures left behind,
And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh
Cling to me? What 's new laughter? Soothes the fresh
Sleep like sleep? Fate 's exhaustless for my sake
In brave resource: but whether bids she slake
My thirst at this first rivulet, or count
No draught worth lip save from some rocky fount
Above i' the clouds, while here she 's provident
Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft tree-tent
Guards, with its face of reate and sedge, nor fail
The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail
At bottom? Oh, 't were too absurd to slight
For the hereafter the to-day's delight!

Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-spring: wear
Home lilies ere strange lotus in my hair!
Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart
Offer to serve, contented for my part
To give life up in service, — only grant
That I do serve; if otherwise, why want
Aught further of me? If men cannot choose
But set aside life, why should I refuse
The gift? I take it — I, for one, engage
Never to falter through my pilgrimage —
Nor end it howling that the stock or stone
Were enviable, truly: I, for one,
Will praise the world, you style mere ante-room
To palace — be it so! shall I assume
— My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the trope,
My mouth the smirk, before the doors fly ope
One moment? What? with guarders row on row,
Gay swarms of varletry that come and go,
Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace
The plackets of, pert claimants help displace,
Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for, — laugh
At yon sleek parasite, break his own staff
'Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder, — why
Admitted to the presence by and by,
Should thought of having lost these make me grieve
Among new joys I reach, for joys I leave?
Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone,
Are floor-work there! But do I let alone
That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule
Once and forever? — Floor-work? No such fool!
Rather, were heaven to forestall earth, I 'd say
I, is it, must be blest? Then, my own way
Bless me! Give firmer arm and fleeter foot,
I 'll thank you: but to no mad wings transmute

These limbs of mine — our greensward was so soft!
Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft:
We feel the bliss distinctlier, having thus
Engines subservient, not mixed up with us.
Better move palpably through heaven: nor, freed
Of flesh, forsooth, from space to space proceed
'Mid flying synods of worlds! No: in heaven's marge
Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe
Solid with stars — the Centaur at his game,
Made tremulously out in hoary flame!
"Life! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull
Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full,
Aside so oft; the death I fly, revealed
So oft a better life this life concealed,
And which sage, champion, martyr, through each path
Have hunted fearlessly — the horrid bath,
The crippling-irons and the fiery chair.
'T was well for them; let me become aware
As they, and I relinquish life, too! Let
What masters life disclose itself! Forget
Vain ordinances, I have one appeal —
I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel;
So much is truth to me. What Is, then? Since
One object, viewed diversely, may evince
Beauty and ugliness — this way attract,
That way repel, — why gloze upon the fact?
Why must a single of the sides be right?
What bids choose this and leave the opposite?
Where 's abstract Right for me? — in youth endued
With Right still present, still to be pursued,
Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife
Each with its proper law and mode of life,
Each to be dwelt at ease in: where, to sway
Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey

Implicit with his serf of fluttering heart,
Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start
Up, Brutus in the presence, then go shout
That some should pick the unstrung jewels out —
Each, well!"
And, as in moments when the past
Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast
Himself quite through mere secondary states
Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,
Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid
By these; as who should pierce hill, plain, grove, glade,
And on into the very nucleus probe
That first determined there exist a globe.
As that were easiest, half the globe dissolved,
So seemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved
By his flesh-half's break-up; the sudden swell
Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,
Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,
Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,
All qualities, in fine, recorded here,
Might be but modes of Time and this one sphere,
Urgent on these, but not of force to bind
Eternity, as Time — as Matter — Mind,
If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert
Their attributes within a Life: thus girt
With circumstance, next change beholds them cinct
Quite otherwise — with Good and Ill distinct,
Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result —
Contrived to render easy, difficult,
This or the other course of . . . what new bond
In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond
Its new sphere, as that course does harm or good
To its arrangements. Once this understood,
As suddenly he felt himself alone,

Quite out of Time and this world: all was known.
What made the secret of his past despair?
— Most imminent when he seemed most aware
Of his own self-sufficiency: made mad
By craving to expand the power he had,
And not new power to be expanded? — just
This made it; Soul on Matter being thrust,
Joy comes when so much Soul is wreaked in Time
On Matter: let the Soul's attempt sublime
Matter beyond the scheme and so prevent
By more or less that deed's accomplishment,
And Sorrow follows: Sorrow how avoid?
Let the employer match the thing employed,
Fit to the finite his infinity,
And thus proceed forever, in degree
Changed but in kind the same, still limited
To the appointed circumstance and dead
To all beyond. A sphere is but a sphere;
Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here;
Since to the spirit's absoluteness all
Are like. Now, of the present sphere we call
Life, are conditions; take but this among
Many; the body was to be so long
Youthful, no longer: but, since no control
Tied to that body's purposes his soul,
She chose to understand the body's trade
More than the body's self — had fain conveyed
Her boundless to the body's bounded lot.
Hence, the soul permanent, the body not, —
Scarcely its minute for enjoying here, —
The soul must needs instruct her weak compeer,
Run o'er its capabilities and wring
A joy thence, she held worth experiencing:
Which, far from half discovered even, — lo,
The minute gone, the body's power let go

Apportioned to that joy's acquirement! Broke
Morning o'er earth, he yearned for all it woke —
From the volcano's vapor-flag, winds hoist
Black o'er the spread of sea, — down to the moist
Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,
Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again —
The Small, a sphere as perfect as the Great
To the soul's absoluteness. Meditate
Too long on such a morning's cluster-chord
And the whole music it was framed afford, —
The chord's might half discovered, what should pluck
One string, his finger, was found palsy-struck.
And then no marvel if the spirit, shown
A saddest sight — the body lost alone
Through her officious proffered help, deprived
Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived, —
Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip hence, —
Vain-gloriously were fain, for recompense,
To stem the ruin even yet, protract
The body's term, supply the power it lacked
From her infinity, compel it learn
These qualities were only Time's concern,
And body may, with spirit helping, barred —
Advance the same, vanquished — obtain reward,
Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,
Of Wrong make Right, and turn Ill Good below.
And the result is, the poor body soon
Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon,
Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.
So much was plain then, proper in the past;
To be complete for, satisfy the whole
Series of spheres — Eternity, his soul
Needs must exceed, prove incomplete for, each
Single sphere — Time. But does our knowledge reach
No farther? Is the cloud of hindrance broke

But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,
Its loves and hates, as now when death lets soar
Sordello, self-sufficient as before,
Though during the mere space that shall elapse
'Twixt his enthralment in new bonds perhaps?
Must life be ever just escaped, which should
Have been enjoyed? — nay, might have been and would,
Each purpose ordered right — the soul's no whit
Beyond the body's purpose under it.
Like yonder breadth of watery heaven, a bay,
And that sky-space of water, ray for ray
And star for star, one richness where they mixed
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary splendors folded in
To die — would soul, proportioned thus, begin
Exciting discontent, or surelier quell
The body if, aspiring, it rebel?
But how so order life? Still brutalize
The soul, the sad world's way, with muffled eyes
To all that was before, all that shall be
After this sphere — all and each quality
Save some sole and immutable Great, Good
And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood
To follow? Never may some soul see All
— The Great Before and After, and the Small
Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,
And take the single course prescribed before,
As the king-bird with ages on his plumes
Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?
But where descry the Love that shall select
That course? Here is a soul whom, to affect,
Nature has plied with all her means, from trees
And flowers e'en to the Multitude! — and these,
Decides he save or no? One word to end!

Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend
And speak for you. Of a Power above you still
Which, utterly incomprehensible,
Is out of rivalry, which thus you can
Love, tho' unloving all conceived by man —
What need! And of — none the minutest duct
To that out-nature, naught that would instruct
And so let rivalry begin to live —
But of a Power its representative
Who, being for authority the same,
Communication different, should claim
A course, the first chose but this last revealed —
This Human clear, as that Divine concealed —
What utter need!
What has Sordello found?
Or can his spirit go the mighty round,
End where poor Eglamor begun? So, says
Old fable, the two eagles went two ways
About the world: where, in the midst, they met,
Though on a shifting waste of sand, men set
Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sordello found?
For they approach — approach — that foot's rebound
Palma? No, Salinguerra though in mail;
They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the veil
Aside — and you divine who sat there dead,
Under his foot the badge: still, Palma said,
A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,
Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies
Help from above in his extreme despair,
And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there
With short quick passionate cry: as Palma pressed
In one great kiss, her lips upon his breast,
It beat.

By this, the hermit-bee has stopped
His day's toil at Goito: the new-cropped
Dead vine-leaf answers, now 't is eve, he bit,
Twirled so, and filed all day: the mansion 's fit,
God counselled for. As easy guess the word
That passed betwixt them, and become the third
To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax
Him with one fault — so, no remembrance racks
Of the stone maidens and the font of stone
He, creeping through the crevice, leaves alone.
Alas, my friend, alas Sordello, whom
Anon they laid within that old font-tomb,
And, yet again, alas!
And now is 't worth
Our while bring back to mind, much less set forth
How Salinguerra extricates himself
Without Sordello? Ghibellin and Guelf
May fight their fiercest out? If Richard sulked
In durance or the Marquis paid his mulct,
Who cares, Sordello gone? The upshot, sure,
Was peace; our chief made some frank overture
That prospered; compliment fell thick and fast
On its disposer, and Taurello passed
With foe and friend for an outstripping soul,
Nine days at least. Then, — fairly reached the goal, —
He, by one effort, blotted the great hope
Out of his mind, nor further tried to cope
With Este, that mad evening's style, but sent
Away the Legate and the League, content
No blame at least the brothers had incurred,
— Dispatched a message to the Monk, he heard
Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,
Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat
And ne'er spoke more, — informed the Ferrarese

He but retained their rule so long as these
Lingered in pupilage, — and last, no mode
Apparent else of keeping safe the road
From Germany direct to Lombardy
For Friedrich, — none, that is, to guarantee
The faith and promptitude of who should next
Obtain Sofia's dowry, — sore perplexed —
(Sofia being youngest of the tribe
Of daughters, Ecelin was wont to bribe
The envious magnates with — nor, since he sent
Henry of Egna this fair child, had Trent
Once failed the Kaiser's purposes — "we lost
Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post —
Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich knock?")
Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock
In pure necessity, and, so destroyed
His slender last of chances, quite made void
Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes
Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's dreams,
Was sucked into Romano. And so hushed
He up this evening's work that, when 't was brushed
Somehow against by a blind chronicle
Which, chronicling whatever woe befell
Ferrara, noted this the obscure woe
Of "Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo
Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his sire,"
The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could but admire
Which of Sofia's five was meant.
The chaps
Of earth's dead hope were tardy to collapse,
Obliterated not the beautiful
Distinctive features at a crash: but dull
And duller these, next year, as Guelfs withdrew
Each to his stronghold. Then (securely too
Ecelin at Campese slept; close by,

Who likes may see him in Solagna lie,
With cushioned head and gloved hand to denote
The cavalier he was) — then his heart smote
Young Ecelin at last; long since adult.
And, save Vicenza's business, what result
In blood and blaze? (So hard to intercept
Sordello till his plain withdrawal!) Stepped
Then its new lord on Lombardy. I' the nick
Of time when Ecelin and Alberic
Closed with Taurello, come precisely news
That in Verona half the souls refuse
Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count —
Have cast them from a throne they bid him mount,
Their Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth.
Ecelin flew there, and the town henceforth
Was wholly his — Taurello sinking back
From temporary station to a track
That suited. News received of this acquist,
Friedrich did come to Lombardy: who missed
Taurello then? Another year: they took
Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook
For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three
Of Guelfs conspired to call themselves "The Free,"
Opposing Alberic, — vile Bassanese, —
(Without Sordello!) — Ecelin at ease
Slaughtered them so observably, that oft
A little Salinguerra looked with soft
Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age
To get appointed his proud uncle's page.
More years passed, and that sire had dwindled down
To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown
Better through age, his parts still in repute,
Subtle — how else? — but hardly so astute
As his contemporaneous friends professed;
Undoubtedly a brawler: for the rest,

Known by each neighbor, and allowed for, let
Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret
Men who would miss their boyhood's bugbear: "trap
The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap
A battered pinion!" — was the word. In fine,
One flap too much and Venice's marine
Was meddled with; no overlooking that!
She captured him in his Ferrara, fat
And florid at a banquet, more by fraud
Than force, to speak the truth; there 's slender laud
Ascribed you for assisting eighty years
To pull his death on such a man; fate shears
The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine thread
You fritter: so, presiding his board-head,
The old smile, your assurance all went well
With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell!)
In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,
Made some pretence at fighting, some amends
For the shame done his eighty years — (apart
The principle, none found it in his heart
To be much angry with Taurello) — gained
Their galleys with the prize, and what remained
But carry him to Venice for a show?
— Set him, as 't were, down gently — free to go
His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe
The swallows soaring their eternal curve
'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens
Gathered importunately, fives and tens,
To point their children the Magnifico,
All but a monarch once in firm-land, go
His gait among them now — "it took, indeed,
Fully this Ecelin to supersede
That man," remarked the seniors. Singular!
Sordello's inability to bar
Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought

About by his strange disbelief that aught
Was ever to be done, — this thrust the Twain
Under Taurello's tutelage, — whom, brain
And heart and hand, he forthwith in one rod
Indissolubly bound to baffle God
Who loves the world — and thus allowed the thin
Gray wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,
And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic
(Mere man, alas!) to put his problem quick
To demonstration — prove wherever 's will
To do, there 's plenty to be done, or ill
Or good. Anointed, then, to rend and rip —
Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip,
They plagued the world: a touch of Hildebrand
(So far from obsolete!) made Lombards band
Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,
And saving Milan win the world's applause.
Ecelin perished: and I think grass grew
Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù
By San Zenon where Alberic in turn
Saw his exasperated captors burn
Seven children and their mother; then, regaled
So far, tied on to a wild horse, was trailed
To death through raunce and bramble-bush. I take
God's part and testify that 'mid the brake
Wild o'er his castle on the pleasant knoll,
You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll —
The earthquake spared it last year, laying flat
The modern church beneath, — no harm in that!
Chirrups the contumacious grasshopper,
Rustles the lizard and the chusats chirre
Above the ravage: there, at deep of day
A week since, heard I the old Canon say
He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst
And Alberic's huge skeleton unhearsed

Only five years ago. He added, "June's
The month for carding off our first cocoons
The silkworms fabricate" — a double news,
Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. Choose!
And Naddo gone, all 's gone; not Eglamor!
Believe, I knew the face I waited for,
A guest my spirit of the golden courts!
Oh strange to see how, despite ill-reports,
Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained
Its joyous look of love! Suns waxed and waned,
And still my spirit held an upward flight,
Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light
More and more gorgeous — ever that face there
The last admitted! crossed, too, with some care
As perfect triumph were not sure for all,
But, on a few, enduring damp must fall,
— A transient struggle, haply a painful sense
Of the inferior nature's clinging — whence
Slight starting tears easily wiped away,
Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play
Of irrepressible admiration — not
Aspiring, all considered, to their lot
Who ever, just as they prepare ascend
Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend
Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,
That upturned fervid face and hair put back!
Is there no more to say? He of the rhymes —
Many a tale, of this retreat betimes,
Was born: Sordello die at once for men?
The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen
Telling how *Sordello Prince Visconti* saved
Mantua, and else where notably behaved —
Who thus, by fortune ordering events,
Passed with posterity, to all intents,
For just the god he never could become.

As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never dumb
In praise of him: while what he should have been,
Could be, and was not — the one step too mean
For him to take, — we suffer at this day
Because of: Ecelin had pushed away
Its chance ere Dante could arrive and take
That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake:
He did much — but Sordello's chance was gone.
Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,
Apollo had been compassed: 't was a fit
He wished should go to him, not he to it
— As one content to merely be supposed
Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed
Really at home — one who was chiefly glad
To have achieved the few real deeds he had,
Because that way assured they were not worth
Doing, so spared from doing them henceforth —
A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes
Never itself, itself. Had he embraced
Their cause then, men had plucked Hesperian fruit
And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot
All he was anxious to appear, but scarce
Solicitous to be. A sorry farce
Such life is, after all! Cannot I say
He lived for some one better thing? this way. —
Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill
By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,
Morning just up, higher and higher runs
A child barefoot and rosy. See! the sun 's
On the square castle's inner-court's low wall
Like the chine of some extinct animal
Half turned to earth and flowers; and through the haze
(Save where some slender patches of gray maize
Are to be overleaped) that boy has crossed

The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost
Matting the balm and mountain camomile.
Up and up goes he, singing all the while
Some unintelligible word to beat
The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet,
So worsted is he at "the few fine locks
Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks
Sun-blanched the live-long summer," — all that 's
left
Of the Goito lay! And thus bereft,
Sleep and forget, Sordello! In effect
He sleeps the feverish poet — I suspect
Not utterly companionless; but, friends,
Wake up! The ghost 's gone, and the story ends
I 'd fain hope, sweetly; seeing, peri or ghoul,
That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,
Evil or good, judicious authors think,
According as they vanish in a stink
Or in a perfume. Friends, be frank! ye snuff
Civet, I warrant. Really? Like enough!
Merely the savor's rareness; any nose
May ravage with impunity a rose;
Rifle a musk-pod and 't will ache like yours!
I 'd tell you that same pungency ensures
An after-gust, but that were overbold.
Who would has heard Sordello's story told.

NOTES

STRAFFORD

Strafford is a drama based upon the historic fact of the Earl of Strafford's impeachment shortly after becoming the King's chief adviser, the material this fact supplies being so shaped, by portraying Strafford as the embodiment of the monarchial idea, and his impeacher, Pym, as the embodiment of the anti-monarchial idea, that the coming triumph of the people of England is presented at the turning-point in its progress.

Act I. opens on a private conclave of the people's party excitedly discussing the bearing on the political future of the news, just received, that Wentworth has returned from Ireland to London. Vane leads in expressing their common dread of his future tactics, and in fiercely accusing him as the cause of all the King's recent successful acts of repression. Identifying England's welfare with that of their Parliamentarian Party, and her subjection with Wentworth's policy, they threaten his life. Hampden tries to calm them and induce them to await Pym's arrival. Pym, entering, confirms the news; shocks the Scotch representatives who are conferring with them, by announcing that the King has just dissolved their Parliament; and adds fuel to the heat against Wentworth by painting, more gravely, a blacker picture than Vane's of the English situation. He interposes, however, against both their shouts for violence and their proposal to take a calmer vengeance, his hope that Wentworth's ability may yet be reclaimed to the cause of the people, attaining success through winning over the court and church party, and thus avoiding the violence that must otherwise mar even the good results at which they aim. Despite Hollis's caution, Hamp-

den's forbearance, and Pym's unwillingness to abandon his old comrade, whom he has vowed not to leave unwatched or unreclaimed during the march of England's destiny which he foresees, Vane captures the enthusiasm of the meeting by affirming that the service of England requires that Wentworth be crushed. Although it is clear that not even Hampden puts any faith in Pym's dream that Wentworth will yet serve England's cause, Pym persists in testing it, and he declares to them all that he will go and sound Wentworth.

Wentworth is introduced in an interview, on his arrival, with Lady Carlisle. While awaiting the King's greeting, he is seeking to learn from her what the news is. Her devotion to him and wish to spare him pain appear in her broken hints concerning the Council then sitting, the measures likely to be taken as to the war with Scotland, and the palace clique's petty depreciation of his services. His sensitive solicitude to serve the King and his nervousness over the lightness and uncertainty of his Majesty's favor come out in his impetuous interruptions and explanations. The court point of view, reflected by Lady Carlisle, which is so utterly unaware that Pym and the people are of any moment, stings him to some thought of both; and after Lady Carlisle leaves him and he is planning how best to manage the King's whims, chafing against his ticklish position, his mind recurs to his old dreams and his old friend just as Pym enters. But he is on his guard against him, at once, forswearing having had any thought of him, and meeting Pym's ardent appeal restrainedly and with a wilful lack of sympathy which hardens into repugnance as the King enters. Pym is dismissed; and with an almost yearning loyalty Wentworth urges Charles to trust him and let him save him from his enemies. When he gets from the King the admission that war against the Scots has been determined upon, he catches at the only justification obtainable for war, the alleged intrigue with France, and

sketches out a feasible policy. He proposes to call parliaments in Ireland and later in England, so controlling them that while they will win the King credit they will not block his wishes. His rapid, earnest plotting carries the King with him, eliciting not only the long-deferred gift of the Earlship, but also his acceptance as chief adviser. He goes out in a rapture of loyalty to his Liege as the Queen enters. Charles falteringly breaks the news to her of Strafford's new position and his own agreement to summon Parliaments. As she storms and scolds, the King coaxes.

Act II. Strafford's skill and the success of his Parliamentary manœuvres next appear in a scene showing the exasperation of the leaders of the faction over the vote just about to be passed. They had been duped into supposing the calling of the Parliaments a sign that Strafford meant them well. They find out that it was his wisest way to defeat them. Vane, the younger, alone is able to say he had never expected anything better. Pym enters with the astounding news that the King has just dissolved Strafford's malleable Parliament. Pym naturally takes it as a sign that the King has thrown Strafford over, seeing that his policy was not friendly to the King's view of the royal prerogative. All agree in supposing that the Earl can now do nothing else but join them. Ostensibly to bid the King farewell, they all flock to Whitehall.

At Whitehall, Strafford, again just arrived in London, is half aware of the upset of his measures for the conduct of the war, and is reproaching the King with the evils resulting from it. In casting about to make the best of the change of plan, originally strong enough to work without help of Parliament, he proposes to call in the aid of that body to repair the errors made, and learns the full extent of the King's duplicity. Strafford's Parliament, about to vote all the subsidies he had ventured to hope for, has been told by the King's representatives that nothing short of twelve would serve, and been dis-

solved. The King's confusion, however, brings the loyal adviser to his support again, with extreme measures to meet the desperate situation, — the seizure of the bullion in the Tower and the debasing of the coinage. Then, tortured with the future thanklessness of undertaking hopeless tasks without being able to place any dependence upon a master subject to every whiff of enmity and counter-influence, he tries to frighten and dominate the King's volatile nature and impress upon him the urgency for a steady policy. The King resents this as rudeness. Strafford, baffled by his serenely exacting selfishness, flares out with bitter accusations, an intuition of his doom through the King's faithlessness getting the better of his devotion. The offended King calls for his attendants, while Strafford tauntingly suggests that he call for the Scots, or Pym and Hampden, when they and their associates enter. Immediately Strafford is on his knees beford the King, shielding his agitation and publicly taking upon his own capable shoulders all the burden of the King's mismanagement, the war, and the dissolution of the Parliament as well. Then, helping Charles to leave the room, he turns to face the indignant group. Pym reminds him of their old tryst, whose alternatives were virtually friendship or the Tower. Strafford takes the reminder defiantly, and the two leaders confront each other with the issue between them now clearly defined. As they leave him, Lady Carlisle enters, and the act closes with a scene which reveals the apprehension with which they both face the ominous future. It betrays, also, that Lady Carlisle's insight in singling him out as ablest to befriend the King's cause is the original factor in his present course. Her regard for him has grown beyond measure, it is evident, while he has so fastened his heart upon the King's cause that his affection for her is a secondary affair. She now forbears to urge it upon him or to give him the useless discouragement of the full light of her penetration, either upon the King's real character or the court intrigues stealthily at

work against him. Both, from their different points of view, — Lady Carlisle, from that of the court, Strafford, from that of political exigencies, — unite in facing with dread the struggle looming dimly ahead of them.

Act III. introduces the leaders of the Court Party. They have just been thrust out of the Parliament the King has suddenly summoned in his fright over the failure of the Scotch war. They have called upon the loyalty of the Commons in the emergency, and have found Strafford's tactics, tried twice over and without his precautions, are productive of results sufficiently unlike Strafford's; and their underplotting against the Earl leaves themselves as well as him defenceless against Pym. The Queen summoning them, they separate to go to her.

Lady Carlisle is with the Queen, telling her that the Parliament now meeting is about to impeach Strafford, and vainly beseeching her to send for the King at once to dissolve it, when the elder Vane enters with reassuring words, which Holland, following, contradicts. The Commons are raging and on their way to Whitehall. The Queen, frightened now, sends for Charles. Savile enters, bringing word that Strafford will be proceeded against legally; and the Queen, reassured that only Strafford is in danger, countermands her message to the King. Lady Carlisle finds herself alone in a group coolly discussing the chances of Strafford's downfall, when he enters. She tries to cover with her welcome the consternation he causes. The Queen and the courtiers confer aside, concluding that he does not know yet and there is no use doing anything. Strafford haughtily ignores them, and urgently desires to see the King, at whose summons he has left York. The Queen finally engages herself to let the King know of his arrival. As soon as they are alone, Lady Carlisle tries to clear up the mystery of the purpose he speaks of; but he puts her off, eagerly questioning her, instead, but lets hints fall which lead her to conclude that he knows of the pending

impeachment, and suspects the Queen's party of connivance in it. She tells him frankly that they know it and do not discountenance it; that the King has not been told, but will not interfere. "Why should I wait longer for him, then?" concludes Strafford, to her great surprise, till he, with more and more exuberant confidence in his own power, lets her know that he has returned with proof that both the popular party and the courtiers are involved in treaties and leagues with the Scots, and that he means to impeach them all and lodge them in the Tower before night. Glowing with triumph, he goes to accomplish his design.

In the antechamber of the House of Lords, through which Strafford has just passed imperiously, groups of the Presbyterians and of Strafford's men are gathered. They fling jeers at one another, and present an effect of multitudinous discussion at cross-purposes over the impending event, which one side supposes is Strafford's impeachment, and the other the impeachment of Strafford's foes. The doors begin to open. The hubbub of contrarily minded triumph redoubles; amid cries of "Void the House!" Strafford bursts out, impeached. A whirl of emotions appear in Strafford's speech and action. At first he is stunned with the shock and shame, and thrilling with Pym's enmity. Then he defies the command to give up his sword; then he writes a message to the King, and cannot threaten a man in the crowd into carrying it. Then he begs his retainers to stab him. Then, most poignant pang of all, he remembers that the King had called him, and had summoned the Parliament; that he had himself just seen the Queen whispering with Vane. Crying "A trap," he is about to stab himself, when his own men disarm him, and with calls of "Strafford!" the doors open wide, disclosing the crowd, Pym and Hampden, and the judges. They represent England, and before them Strafford kneels.

Act IV. opens upon an audience of the King with Hollis, whom Carlisle has urged to intervene for Straf-

ford. His indignation against the King's inaction shows how fruitless the visit has been. He ends the conference by accusing the King of being the one to blame, since the only effective evidence which Strafford has been unable to beat back came through Vane. As he goes out he warns Charles that the trial will that day take another shape, — not whether the King's side or England's shall conquer, but whether Strafford or his master shall pay the forfeit. In a panic at this, the King gives Carlisle a warrant to rescue Strafford with the army, and sends her to him with the news.

The trial scene follows. Throngs of spectators exemplify the popular excitement, and report the progress of events. Strafford enters with Lady Carlisle. She proffers him the paper the King has sent. He is confident that he will save himself in the speech he is about to offer, and is full of scorn at the charges brought. He refuses even to look at the paper, and is sure he can do without it and serve the King the better when he returns to him. Hollis warns him that it would be better to turn to Pym, who is coming. As they leave, he enters, discussing with his associates the Bill of Attainder he now proposes to bring. Young Vane and the men so hot against Strafford at the opening of the play, are now drawing back from the last step. Pym stands firm. They now try to influence him through the friendship they disregarded before, offering that he himself shall be the one to bear the pardon of the Commons to Strafford. Pym only looks forward to a more fatal meeting with Strafford.

The King at Whitehall, meanwhile, is relieved to learn that the Earl has been able to free himself. He is gently blaming himself, and also regretting that he was so rash as to propose the needless scheme of rescue, when Pym breaks in upon him, and in spite of his displeasure forces him to see that the issue lies with him. The trial now failing, it is for him to say if he will grant consent to the Bill of Attainder now framed, if Parliament concedes it.

The King wavers, casts the burden of decision upon Pym, offers palliatives, but does not meet the point. Pym repeats it in a more inescapable way. Will he assent or have the underlying question mooted, — "How long the Many must endure the One?" Charles wavers no longer. Lady Carlisle enters to return the scheme of rescue to the King, bringing him messages of loyal love from Strafford, who she thinks is free. A glance at the two undeceives her. The bill in Pym's hand tells her the story. She declares to herself that she alone is left to save him.

Act V. Lady Carlisle, with her own plan of rescue perfected, is meeting the objections and doubts of Hollis, who is full of the sorrow of his approaching duty to go and tell Strafford that he must die.

The scene in the Tower of London follows. Strafford sits with his prattling children awaiting the King's pardon. He will not allow himself to suspect the King of faithlessness, and he breaks out in fancies of what his life will be like in future, when Hollis enters with an attendant. Every word is a grief to Hollis, a reproach to the attendant, who is Charles in disguise. Hollis announces that the King has signed his death-warrant; and after the first outburst Strafford accepts that, too, at the royal hands, whereupon Charles falls into an agony of futile remorse, calling for Balfour and bidding him run to the Commons and grant everything, if Strafford may live. With the next breath he conditions it upon the Queen's desire. Again he commands the troops to be brought up, till Balfour reminds him that the crowd numbers 100,000, when he cowers down in a stupor. Strafford's only comment on all this is to excuse the King and assent to his own death. Lady Carlisle then enters, still proposing to pretend that the plan of escape now ready to be carried out is the King's, so that it may be more acceptable to Strafford, till she recognizes the wretched prince, when Hollis lets Strafford know the truth about it. They vainly seek to persuade

him to stain his children's name by breaking away from a legal sentence. Lady Carlisle, frantic to save him, then appeals to him not to forsake the King, and at that Strafford yields. But as they turn to the river-gate where Carlisle's boat is in waiting, he recoils as from some portent verified, and they find that the plan of escape has been discovered. As Strafford opens the door, Pym confronts him. The tryst has been kept, for England's sake, unflinchingly. Strafford, also, acquiesces in his doom, for England's sake, till the thought of leaving the King behind him at Pym's mercy forces from him a last impassioned plea to Pym to save the King from the fate he forebodes.

Pym replies that he will in that, too, do England's bidding, and the play closes with Strafford's ominous cry, "O God, I shall die first!"

I. i. 4. *Pym:* John (1584–1643), born in Somersetshire, educated at Oxford, member of Parliament for Tavistock, in Devonshire, 1614, and successive Parliaments, and one of the managers of the impeachment of Buckingham in 1626, preceding opening of this play. See Browning's "Cavalier Tunes," **I. 7. 16.** and "Parleyings: Charles Avison," **422–433.** — *Rudyard:* Benjamin, an eloquent member of the first and successive Parliaments under Charles I. — *Henry Vane:* (1612–1622), son of Sir Henry Vane, Secretary of State to Charles I., born in Kent, educated at Oxford, studied in Geneva, adopting political principles opposed to those of his father, with whom he quarrelled. Going to New England in 1635, he was made Governor of the Massachusetts Colony in 1636; but his liberal and tolerant views were the means of defeating him in 1637, when he returned to England, joining actively with the Parliamentarian party at the time this play opens, 1639, and sitting in the Commons in 1640. After the Restoration, sent to the Tower, tried for treason and beheaded. See Milton's sonnet "To Sir Henry Vane the Younger." Browning's "Cavalier Tunes," **I. 13.**

7. *Hampden:* John (1594–1643), of Buckinghamshire, born in London; in 1626 imprisoned for refusing to contribute to forced loan; leader of Commons in 1636, in objection to imposition of ship-money; took up arms against the King in the civil war, and fell at Chalgrove Field, Oxfordshire. See Gray's "Elegy;" Browning's "Cavalier Tunes," I. 12. and "Charles Avison," 409.

8. *Hollis:* Denzil (1597–1680), one of the leaders in the Parliament in 1629, joining with Sir John Eliot in objecting to the King's levy, and when the Speaker refused to put Eliot's remonstrance to vote, read it himself, and held the Speaker by force in the chair till it was passed, and was sent to the Tower in consequence.

12. *You are his brother, Hollis:* Hollis's sister, Lady Arabella Hollis, daughter of the Earl of Clare, was married to Wentworth (his second wife) in 1625.

17. *Wentworth:* Thomas (1593–1641), of an ancient Yorkshire family and estate, educated at St. John's, Cambridge, travelled in France and Italy, and on his return sat in the Parliaments of 1614 and 1621, not until 1626 siding with the Parliamentarian side in the disagreements with the King and then but moderately. In 1627 he refused the forced loan, and was imprisoned, and in the third Parliament, under Charles in 1628, spoke, with great effect, on the grievances troubling the people. He was, shortly after, made Baron and Viscount, and appointed President of the North in 1628, Privy Councillor in 1629, and Lord Deputy of Ireland, 1632, holding this position at the time of the opening of the play.

18. *The Philistine strode, cursing . . . but David,* etc.: 1 Samuel xvi.

22. *Ten years' disuse of Parliaments:* from 1629 till 1640 no Parliament was convened.

23. *When the last sat, Wentworth sat with us:* 1628–1629, led by Wentworth, during its first session, 1628, in its demand for Petition of Right. From the record remaining of two of Wentworth's speeches, the following

extracts are taken: "The raising of money by loans; strengthened by commission, with unheard-of instructions; the billeting of soldiers by the lieutenants — have been as if they could have persuaded Christian princes, nay, worlds, that the right of empire was to take away goods by strong hand. . . . This hath not been done by the King (under the pleasing shade of whose crown, I hope, we shall ever gather the fruits of justice), but by projectors; these have extended the prerogative of the King beyond its just limits, so as to mar the sweet harmony of the whole. . . . They have taken from us all means of supplying the King, and ingratiating ourselves with him, by tearing up the roots of all property; which, if they be not set again into the ground by his Majesty's hand, we shall have, instead of beauty, baldness!" Again, on the application for subsidies: "Our persons have been injured, both by imprisonment without law — nay, against law, boundless and without bank! — and by being designed to some office, charge, and employment, . . . as a brand of infamy and mark of disgrace. Oh! Mr. Speaker, when it may not be safe to deny payments upon unjust exactions, but we must go to prison for it, — nor in this place to speak our consciences, but we must be stamped to unwilling and unfitting employments!" Then, proposing a committee for grievances: "Let no man judge this way a break-neck of parliaments; but a way of honor to the king, nay, of profit; for besides the supply which we shall readily give him suitable to his occasions, we give him our hearts. Our hearts, Mr. Speaker, a gift that God calls for, and fit for a king!"

34. *Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be:* 1 Samuel v.

41. *Turns Ireland to a private stage for training infant villanies,* etc.: "For this is a ground I take with me," wrote Wentworth to the King, when about to sail for Dublin, "that to serve your Majesty compleatly well in Ireland, we must not only endeavour to enrich *them,*

but make sure still to hold them dependent upon the Crown and not able to subsist without us." Arriving in Ireland in 1633, he called a Parliament the next year, "threatening, cajoling and managing it," says Gardiner, "till he got what he wanted." He created a well-paid and disciplined army, fostered the material interests of the country, especially the linen industry. He disregarded popular desires and private interests, manipulated juries and raised legal quibbles to suit his ends, and broke the King's promises, but did all that was expedient to secure wealth and good order.

56. *The Bill of Rights:* called the "second great Charter of English Libertyes," declaring that the King had no right to billet soldiers without householder's authority, levy taxes or loans without consent of Parliament, or imprison without trial, granted June 7, 1628.

57. *In an obscure small room a stealthy gathering:* "There is no doubt," says Foster, "that a close correspondence with the Scotch commissioners, headed by Lords Loudon and Dumferling, was entered into under the management of Pym and Hampden. . . . Whenever necessity obliged the meetings to be held in London, they took place at Pym's house in Gray's Inn Lane."

62. *Hamilton:* James, Marquis of Hamilton (1606–1649), appointed High Commissioner to Scotland, 1638, to treat with the General Assembly and Parliament convened there. Beheaded after victory of Cromwell.

63. *Cottington:* Francis, Lord Cottington, Chancellor of the Exchequer, "swayed neither by zeal for public good nor scrupulous regard for justice," says Gardiner. — *Laud:* William (1573–1645), "popishly inclined" and detested by the Puritans, Chaplain to James I., made Bishop of Bath and Wells and Dean of the Chapel Royal, 1626; Archbishop of Canterbury, 1633; impeached and sent to the Tower in 1640, and beheaded.

80. *Runnymead:* where Magna Charta, the first great Bill of Rights, was signed by John I.

90. *Haman:* Esther iii. — *Ahithophel:* 2 Samuel xv. 31.

92. *The League and Covenant:* the committees known as the four Tables, assuming the Government of Scotland in 1637; all Scots signing its agreement, called the "Covenant."

108. *Eliot:* John, of Devonshire, member of St. Germains, 1614, and successive Parliaments; leader of second Parliament under Charles I., and manager of the impeachment of Buckingham in 1628, and after the tumult in the House, in 1629, when dissolved by the King, presented the appeal to the people against innovations in religion and levies without authority of Parliament, the motion being read and put to vote. with assistance of Hollis and Valentine. Imprisoned in the Tower for three and a half years, and died there from result of colds in 1632.

111. *Then met at Greenwich:* "There had been," says Dr. Welwood in his memoirs, "a long and intimate friendship between Mr. Pym and Sir Thomas Wentworth, and they had gone hand-in-hand in the House of Commons. But when Sir Thomas Wentworth was upon making his peace with the court, he sent to Pym to meet him alone at Greenwich, where he began in a set speech to sound Mr. Pym about the dangers they were like to run by the courses they were in, and what advantages they might have if they would but listen to some offers which would probably be made them from the court. Pym, understanding his drift, stopped him short with the expression: 'You need not use all this art to tell me that you have a mind to leave us; but remember what I tell you: You are going to be undone; and remember, also, that though you leave us now, I will never leave you while your head is on your shoulders.' "

131. *Seven years long the Midianite drove Israel into dens:* Judges vi.–viii.

135. *The ravaged body:* "Wentworth had arranged everything for his departure to England," says Foster, "when one of his paroxysms of illness seized him. He

wrestled with it desperately, and set sail." His despatches show the frightful nature and extent of his infirmities; the fever which ravaged London in 1622 and was fatal to his first wife, Lady Margaret Clifford, seized him also, and affected him all his life.

141. *The King has just dissolved your Parliament:* Hamilton's embassy to the Scots (see note **62**) was met by demands for a free Parliament and General Assembly, which the King was forced to yield; but the Assembly scarcely met before it abolished innovations in worship, and investigated and deposed bishops, whereupon Charles dissolved it.

147. *The Court gives out his own concerns have brought him back: I know 't is the King calls him:* "In the danger threatened by the Scots' Covenant," says Forster, "Wentworth was Charles's only hope; the King sent for him, saying he desired his personal counsel and attendance. He wrote: 'The Scots' Covenant begins to spread too far, yet, for all this, I will not have you take notice that I have sent for you, but pretend some other occasion of business.'" He arrived in London, November, 1639.

158. *Laud's laying his religion on the Scots:* a new Prayer-book, drawn up for Scotland by Laud, was initiated at Edinburgh, July 23, 1637, amid the wildest uproar, this being the occasion when Jenny Geddes threw a three-legged stool at the officiating Dean. Out of the resistance to this Liturgy and the Book of Canons, both of which were vainly backed by the King's injunction, grew the establishment of the four committees called "The Tables," and the declaration called "The Covenant," signed eagerly by the Scots, that they would uphold their religion against "errors and corruptions."

181. *They struck down Joab:* 1 Kings ii. 22–25, 28–34.

184. *No Feltons:* John Felton, an officer under Buckingham, the favorite of James and Charles, assassinating him, August 23, 1628.

188. *I believe . . . Wentworth rejoins you:* "Some," says May, the historian, "remembering his early exertions in the cause of the people, fondly imagined that he had been hitherto subservient to the court only to ingratiate himself thoroughly with the King, and that he would now employ his ascendency to wean his majesty from arbitrary counsels. Others who knew his character more profoundly had different thoughts, and secretly cherished their own most active energies."

200. *Gracchus' death:* Tiberius Gracchus, tribune of the Roman people, 133 B. C., brought in a bill reviving an ancient law that limited the amount of land to be owned by any one man. The senators opposed his re-election, and while the voting was proceeding made an attack upon the people, in which Tiberius was killed. His brother, Caius, became tribune ten years later, and carried on still more sweeping reforms. Of these two children did their mother Cornelia say that they were her "jewels."

203. *One month before he took at the King's hand,* etc.: he was raised to the peerage July 22, 1628, the Parliament prorogued June 26, in which he had made his ability known, bringing him, at his own desire, through Weston, to a personal presentation to the King. He was called to the Privy Council, as he took his seat, promising to "vindicate the monarchy forever from the conditions and restraints of subjects." The viscountship and presidency of the Council of the North, then stipulated for, being conferred upon him December 13, 1628, a tribunal which exercised almost unlimited authority over the territory beyond the Humber.

213. *Aceldama:* Acts i. 19.

253. *Fiennes:* Nathaniel (1608–1669, second son of Lord Say and Sele, educated at Oxford and Geneva, and, like the younger Vane, devoted to Independent principles, and a leader in the Parliamentarian movement, but, unlike Vane, a Presbyterian.

255. *Save the northern parts where Wentworth's in-*

fluence: on his way back to Ireland, Wentworth passed through York, where he "fell with all his accustomed vigor on the collection of ship-money. That famous tax had recently been levied. [Ship-money was an arbitrary tax levied on the seaports for the equipment of a fleet.] In every other county threats and murmurs accompanied the payment, — in Yorkshire, during Wentworth's presence, silence."

ii. 3. *Lucy:* Lady Carlisle, daughter of the ninth Earl of Northumberland; her husband, James, Lord Hay, and Earl of Carlisle, had been dead three years in 1639, the date of the opening of this play. Her niece was the "Sacharissa" celebrated in Waller's verse, and she herself is referred to as the "bright Carlile of the Court of heaven." Dryden called her the "Helen of her country," and she seems to have wielded at the Court and in public affairs the influence of a woman of character and intellect, as well as of great personal attraction. Sir Tobie Matthews, in his "character" of her, prefixed to a collection of letters published in 1660, says that "her wit being most eminent among the rest of her great abilities," she chose as friends "such as are of the most eminent condition, both for power and employments; not with any design towards her own particular, either of advantage or curiosity, but her nature values fortunate persons as virtuous." Browning says he sketched her character at first from Matthews, "but it was too artificial, and the substituted outline is exclusively from Voiture and Waller." A letter of Voiture's, written to Mr. Gordon on leaving England in 1623, says that he has brought "thoughts enough from London to last a lifetime. . . . You will easily guess that I do not mean by this the Tower, or the lions you showed me. In one human being you let me see more treasures than there are there, and even more lions and leopards. It will not be difficult for you to guess after this that I speak of the Countess of Carlisle. For there is nobody else of whom all this good and evil can be said. No matter how dan-

gerous it is to let the memory dwell upon her, I have not, so far, been able to keep mine from it, and quite honestly, I would not give the picture of her that lingers in my mind, for all the loveliest things I have seen in my life. I must confess that she is an enchanting personality, and there would not be a woman under heaven so worthy of affection, if she only knew what it was, and if she had as sensitive a nature as she has a reasonable mind. But with the temperament we know she possesses, there is nothing to be said except that she is the most lovable of all things not good, and the most delightful poison that Nature ever concocted. My dread of her wit nearly decided me not to send you these verses, for I know she is a judge in all things of the good and the bad, and all the kindness that ought to reside in the will, with her is concentrated in the judgment." (*Poet-lore*, iv. 470.) Of her intimacy with Strafford, he himself wrote: "A nobler nor a more intelligent friendship did I never meet with in my life."

21. *Savile:* Lord Savile, son of the Sir John whom Wentworth superseded as *custos rotulorum*, or sheriff, in Yorkshire, and who regained the office through Buckingham, the feud between the two being continued by the son. — *Holland:* Lord Holland, the Queen's favorite Counsellor, like Savile, always ready to intrigue against Strafford. — *Hamilton:* note **62.** — *Vane:* Sir Harry the elder, secretary to Charles I.

41. *Nibble at what you do:* Laud wrote: "I have of late heard some muttering about in the Court, but can meet with nothing to fasten on: only it makes me doubt some one hath been nibbling about it" (see "Strafford Papers," vol. ii. p. 127).

58. *Your profit in the Customs:* "Wentworth wrote to Laud: 'I have a share for a short time in these customs, which, while his majesty's revenue is then increased more than £20,000 by year, proves, nevertheless, a greater profit to me than ever I dreamed of.' When Laud read this passage to Charles, the King observed,

impatiently, 'But he doth not tell you how much;' and plainly intimated that he grudged the minister his share of the profit."

81. *Not the Scots' war? — without consulting me:* "Wentworth was not at first consulted respecting the commotion in Scotland. He strove as far as possible, by urging strong defensive measures, to prevent an open rupture." He wrote to Charles: "If the war were with a foreign enemy, I should like well to have the first blow; but, being with your majesty's own natural howbeit rebellious subjects, it seems to me a tender point to draw blood first; for, till it come to that, all hope is not lost of reconciliation."

94. *Not picked up the Queen's glove:* the few attempts to ingratiate himself with the Queen, which were ultimately forced upon Wentworth, were attended with but faint success, and he appears to have impressed her on the whole with little beyond the prettiness of his hands, which she allowed to be the finest in the world.

96. *Weston:* (–1635), treasurer.

98. *These insects:* he was possessed with a rooted dislike, from the first, to the Court flies that buzzed around the monarch, and as little inclined to suffer their good offices as to deprecate their hostility.

156. *You twice prayed so humbly:* "The ambition which moves me powerfully to serve your Majesty . . . suggests unto me an hope I may be more enabled in these restless desires of mine, if I might . . . receive so great a mark of your favour as to have this family honoured with an earldom;" Charles replying that he was not displeased, "though for the present I grant it not." Later, he wrote again, asking it in refutation of his enemies' insinuations, when it was again refused.

157. *Thirty silver pieces:* Matthew xxvi. 3–9.

166. *I refused the first:* at the close of his letter soliciting the King for an earldom, he had begged him to let "no other person know hereafter your Majesty found it in your wisdom not fit to be done."

176. *In this Ezekiel chamber:* Ezekiel viii.

191. *We have proofs that they intrigue with France:* "Charles had come upon traces of some communication," says Gardiner, "between the Scotch insurgents and the French government."

229. *Summon a Parliament:* "His first step," says Firth, "was to counsel a new levy of ship-money; his next to persuade the King to call a Parliament (December 5, 1639)."

240. *Take this ere you go,* etc.: the Order of the Garter was given him by Charles, September 24–January 12, 1640, created Earl of Strafford, and appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, January 13. From his arrival in London at this time "he became what he had never been before," says Gardiner, "the trusted counsellor of Charles."

II. 1. *Subsidies:* originally grants by Parliament to the King; under Charles I. it meant a tax levied on property at the rate of 4 shillings per pound on land, *2s. 8d.* on goods valued by commissioners.

3. *Out of the serpent's root,* etc.: Isaiah xiv. 29.

4. *Cockatrice:* a corruption of the Greek for lizard, *krokódeilos,* a fabulous creature, same as basilisk.

34. *Star Chamber:* an ancient Court of Justice under the direction of the Chancellor, and Lords spiritual and temporal, who were privy councillors of the King, and two judges of common law appointed by the King, trying cases of forgery, perjury, riot, conspiracy, etc. Odious as an instrument of royal oppression. It could fine, mutilate, pillory, and imprison, without redress, and its abolishment by Parliament was one of the reforms of the Long Parliament. Called "Star Chamber" from the ceiling ornaments of the room.

54. *Glanville:* Speaker of the Commons during the Short Parliament.

56. *No sum short of just twelve subsidies:* the King proposed to give up his right to ship-money on the House granting him twelve subsidies. Pym and others ob-

jected, on the principle that any grant would involve recognition of the King's right, others on the amount. After two days' debate, the elder Vane announced that the King would receive nothing short of his original demand, and the next day, May 5, 1640, the King dissolved the Parliament, after but twenty-three days' session.

70. *We 'll not have our Parliaments like those in Ireland:* the Irish Parliament could be summoned but once a year, and then only to consider bills approved by the English Privy Council.

ii. **20.** *One blow, only one, then, peace:* Wentworth wrote Charles that he would carry on the Scots war till Prayer-book and bishops were restored, Scotland governed by the King and Council of England, "in a great part at least, as we are here" in Ireland, and the Scots "cudgelled back into their right wits."

29. *I am . . . to lead the English army:* after the abrupt dissolution of Parliament, "that fatal State error," according to Forster, "an army, to the command of which Northumberland had been appointed, was marched against the Scots. Severe illness, however, held Northumberland to his bed, and the King resolved to appoint Strafford in his place."

91. *Conway:* Lord Conway, Principal Secretary to his Majesty.

92. *Ormond:* the young Earl of Ormond, who had refused to relinquish his sword in the session of the Irish Parliament, as Wentworth had ordered all members to do, saying to the usher that he should have no sword of his except through his body, and on being brought before Wentworth, quietly produced his Majesty's writ summoning him to Parliament, *cinctum cum gladio*, girt with sword, which conduct led Wentworth to account it better to make him a friend than an enemy, and take him into his service.

93. *We 'll try the City . . . debase the coin:* "The first blow to Strafford's policy," says Firth, "was the

rupture between the King and the Parliament in May, 1640. Then came the failure of successive attempts to raise money, by a forced loan, from the London merchants, from the King of Spain, or the coinage of base money. All hung now on the issue of the campaign. Scarcely recovered from an illness which had brought him to death's door, Strafford was despatched to the North to take command of the army on the border."

98. *They 'll close around you:* "Intrigues of the most disgraceful character, carried on by Holland, Hamilton, and Vane, and assisted every way by the Queen, united with his sickness to break him down," says Forster.

178. *Weary, and far from sure his Squires are not the Giant's friends:* "Pity me, for never came any man to so lost a business. The army altogether unexercised and unprovided of all necessaries. That part which I now bring with me from Durham the worst I ever saw. Our horse all cowardly, the country from Berwick to York in the power of the Scot, an universal affright in all, a general disaffection to the King's service, none sensible of his dishonour. In one word, here alone to fight with all these evils without any one to help."

217. *You that told me first:* the intuitive imagination of the poet has supplied what no history gives, — the bond relating Strafford to the King through Lady Carlisle's inducing him to become what he was ready to be — the King's champion.

258. *The George:* badge of the order of the Garter, representing St. George fighting the dragon.

260. *A masque:* a spectacular dramatic entertainment usual in the English courts, dialogue, dumb-show, dancing and music, with elaborate and costly mechanical contrivances and costumes. Daniel and Ben Jonson occupied themselves much with masques. Shakespeare introduces one in "The Tempest."

III. i. **3.** *Fresh news from Scotland:* Edinburgh, Dumbarton, and Stirling having been seized, Conway was routed at Newbern on the 28th of August, the day after

Strafford reached York, the Scots forcing the "passes of the Tyne" and occupying Newcastle on that day, the 29th; and thence they sent their proposals of peace to the King, coupled with preparations to march on York.

12. *The new Parliament:* the Long Parliament which Charles was obliged to summon September 24 to meet November 3.

20. *Unlooked for summons:* "Threat of a Scots advance," says Green, "forced Charles to give way, after endeavoring to evade the necessity of convoking a Parliament by calling a Council of peers at York."

40. *Eliot's old method:* who, when Charles adjourned the Parliament of 1629, told the Speaker, about to leave, that the order of the House would excuse him with the King, and with others restrained him in his seat, and prevented some of the members from going by locking the doors.

41. *The great Duke:* George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, favorite of James and Charles.

45. *You have done the best of turns to Strafford*, etc.: Clarendon says: "Those who, no doubt, were retained for that purpose took opportunity to incense the army against him, and so far prevailed in it that in a short time it was more inflamed against him than against the enemy." Thereupon Strafford fell back upon York. While desperately trying to animate his army, he learned that his old enemy, Lord Savile, was forwarding a treaty with the Scots.

46. *Set the Scots on Strafford:* the Scotch Commissioners denounced Strafford in a public paper October 8, and declared that they would insist on his punishment as an incendiary.

ii. **3.** *To impeach Lord Strafford:* on the 7th November committees to investigate Strafford's conduct had been appointed.

15. *Because the King sent for him:* "As soon as Parliament opened," says Firth, "Charles discovered that

it was necessary to have Strafford again by his side, and summoned him to London."

28. *Theobald's:* a manor in Hertfordshire with fine gardens, built for Queen Elizabeth's entertainment by Lord Burleigh. James I. got it from his son in exchange for Hatfield. James died there, and Charles was proclaimed King at the court-gate.

42. *Laud is talked of, Cottington and Windebank:* "Meanwhile the Commons were dealing roughly," says Green, "with the agents of the Royal System. In every county a list of the royal officers, under the name of 'delinquents,' was ordered to be prepared and laid before the Houses. Windebank, the Secretary of State, . . . fled in terror over sea. Laud himself was flung into prison."

96. *You were stanch at Durham:* "Thwarted and exasperated on all sides, he resolved to furnish one more proof (it was destined to be the last!) of the possibility of recovering the royal authority by a great and vigorous exertion. During the negotiations no actual cessation of arms had been agreed to by the Scots, and he therefore secretly despatched a party of horse, under a favorite officer, to attack them in their quarters. A large body of the enemy were defeated by this manœuvre; all the officers taken prisoners, the army inspirited, and the spirits of Strafford himself restored, . . . when, suddenly, the King, prevailed on by others, commanded him to forbear. In the same moment, without any previous warning, he was told that a Parliament was summoned." See also lines **150-160.**

164. *See, ample proof:* Mr. C. H. Firth, in Introduction to "Browning's Life of Strafford" (note xliv.), says: "The statement that Strafford intended to accuse his opponents is made in Laud's 'History of the Troubles,' Rushworth's 'Trial of Strafford,' Sanderson's 'Reign of King Charles,' and in 'Memoirs of the Earl of Manchester,'" and he considers it curious, supposing Dr. Furnivall is correct in ascribing Forster's "Life of Straf-

ford" to Browning, that the poet said so little in the biography of what he made good use of in the play. Strafford arrived in London November 9, 1640, resting the next day, the 10th, and took his seat on the morning of the 11th in the House of Lords, without presenting this evidence of treasonable conspiracy. Meanwhile, seven articles of impeachment had been drawn up against him, and were presented on a charge of high treason against Strafford that afternoon in the House of Lords by Pym. Mr. Firth, in his Introduction already quoted, supposes that the reason why the Earl left the House without saying a word was because Charles had drawn back. Browning's arrangement makes Charles away, at Theobald's, needing to be called, but he makes Strafford go to the House, intending not to wait for Charles and find himself forestalled by Pym.

170. *Losels:* lose-alls.

209. *"Thorough" he 'll cry:* Laud wrote Wentworth: "And for the State, indeed, my lord, I am for Thorough," to which, in replying, Wentworth said that he knew no reason why Laud should not rule over his difficulties in England, "as I, poor beagle, do here; and that I do, and will do, in all that concerns my Master's service, upon the peril of my head," whereupon Laud rejoined that he saw he deciphered his note well — "do so still; thorow and thorow. Oh, that I were where I might go so too! . . . Go on a God's name!"

iii. **1.** *Maxwell sought to stay the Earl:* "With speed he comes to the House; he calls rudely at the door; James Maxwell, keeper of the black rod, opens; his lordship, with a proud, glooming countenance, makes towards his place at the board head" (Baillie).

4. *Rufflers:* swaggerers.

10. *Are we in Geneva?* alluding to the city of Calvin, upon which that Presbyterian divine had imposed a strict moral code. The retort, upon the rigorous rule of Strafford governing in Ireland, is apposite.

13. *King Pym:* a nickname given Pym at this time.

15. *St. John:* Oliver St. John, the Solicitor General.

28. *Wear such a ruff:* the ruff and peaked hat marked the Puritan.

29. *St. John's head in a charger:* Matthew xiv. 8.

41. *Pride before destruction,* etc.: Proverbs xvi. 18.

43. *Word in season,* etc.: Proverbs xv. 23.

47. *How hath the oppressor ceased:* Isaiah xiv. 4.

52. *The doors open,* etc.: "When the message from the House of Commons was called in, and when Mr. Pym at the bar, and in the name of all the Commons of England, impeached Thomas, Earl of Strafford (with the addition of all his other titles), of high treason . . . at once many bid him void the House; so he is forced, in confusion, to go to the door till he was called" (Baillie).

78. *Cries from within:* "After consultation, being called in, he stands, but is commanded to kneel, and on his knees to hear the sentence. He is delivered to the keeper of the black rod as prisoner. . . . In the outer room James Maxwell required him as prisoner to deliver his sword. When he has got it he cries with a loud voice for his man to carry my lord-lieutenant's sword" (Baillie).

82. *Allerton:* Northallerton, in Yorkshire.

91. *My safety guaranteed:* Charles pledged himself that, "while there was a King in England, not a hair of Strafford's head should be touched by the Parliament."

IV. i. 17. *The screened gallery:* Baillie says the King, who, with the Queen and Court, sat during the proceedings in cabinets screened by trellis work, "brake down the screens with his own hands, so they sat in the eyes of all [see **iv. 2. 12**], but little more regarded than if they had been absent, for the lords sat covered."

51. *Concert with me on saving him:* "Hollis, though one of the hottest men of his party," says Burnet, "always withdrew when this matter concerning his brother-in-law was before them."

54. *Pym's charges . . . a blind moth-eaten law:* Strafford said in his defence: "It is now 240 years since any

man was touched for this alleged crime, to this height before myself. Let us not awaken these sleeping lions to our destructions by taking up a few musty records." Gardiner says that under the scope of the Statute of Edward III. defining treason, it was difficult to draw any act of Strafford's.

62. *Vane . . . has proved it*, etc.: according to Forster, "early on the morning of the thirteenth day of the trial Pym entered the House of Commons and announced a communication respecting the Earl of Strafford of vital importance. The members were ordered to remain in their places, and the doors of the House were locked. Pym and the young Sir Harry Vane then rose, and produced a paper containing 'a copy of notes taken at a junta of the privy council for the Scots affairs about the 5th of May last.' These notes were made by Sir Henry Vane the elder; and Clarendon says that he placed them in the hands of Pym out of hatred to Strafford. Whitelock states, with more appearance of truth, that the elder Vane, being absent from London, and in want of some papers, sent the key of his study to his son, and that the latter in executing his father's orders found this paper, and was ultimately induced by Pym to allow its production against Strafford." It contained notes of a speech by Strafford at the Council, in which he spoke of the King as loose from all rule of government, the essential words being, "You have an army in Ireland that you may employ to reduce this kingdom to obedience."

91. *The question . . . takes another shape to-day:* after reading these notes Pym moved that a Bill of Attainder, which he now also produced, should be read for the first time. On the passing of this by the Lords, the King's confirmation would be necessary. "Unhappy men," says Baillie, "putts the King daily in harder straits . . . now they have putt them on a Bill which will force the King either to be our agent and formal voicer to his death, or else do the world knows not what."

101. *Bids your brother bring the army up:* plans to bribe the Governor of the Tower to let Strafford escape, or to bring a body of troop into it, were connected with a wider plot to bring up Northumberland's army; all involved the King.

ii. **7.** *A foolish word or two about his children:* " 'Were it not for the interest of those pledges that a saint in heaven left me, I would be loth, my lords' — for the moment he could say no more. The strong, iron-hearted man burst into tears," says Gardiner.

14. "*Nor is this way a novel way of blood,*" etc.: Pym's actual words in presenting the motion for the Bill of Attainder. Gardiner says the Lords wavered on the legality of a sentence for impeachment, so that proceeding in which the Lords alone were judges, the Commons being the accusers, was dropped, and a Bill of Attainder introduced which was subject to a different procedure, could be proposed in either House, and, when passed, like any other bill, and accepted by the King, was an act of power requiring no reasons. Its penalties against the attainted person (Latin *attinctus*, stained) were forfeiture of office, "corruption" of blood, — implying that the corrupted or stained person has debarred himself from inheriting or transmitting lands, — and death. See note **91**, Vane's speech, **122-128** and foll.

16. *What ails him?* "At this moment, it is said, Strafford had been closely and earnestly watching Pym, when the latter, suddenly turning, met the fixed and wasted features of his early associate. A rush of other feelings crowding into that look for a moment dispossessed him. But a moment, and Pym's eloquence and dignified command returned." Mr. Firth remarks upon this that "all the authorities say is that Pym's memory failed him."

17. *Haselrig:* Sir Arthur, member of this and successive Parliaments, in 1642, with Hampden, Pym, Hollis, and Strode, accused by the King of high treason in correspondence with the Scots.

41. *Some eighteen days:* the trial began March 22, 1641. The Bill of Attainder passed its first reading April 10; passed finally May 8.

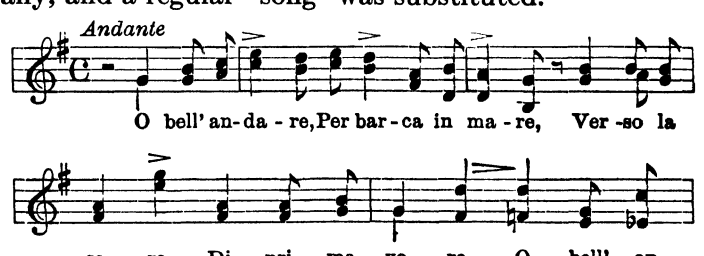
54. *Radcliffe . . . is safe in prison:* "The person on whose evidence Strafford mainly relied in the proof of his answers, Sir George Radcliffe, had, by a masterstroke of Pym's, been incapacitated by a charge of treason" (Forster).
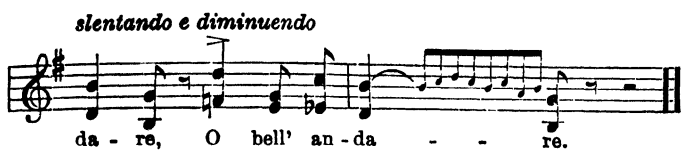
iii. **52.** *'T is I should sign:* see note **91.**

88. *Your scheme returned:* the King's scheme to bring up the army, exposed by Pym May 5, settled Strafford's fate, inducing both Houses to pass the bill, amid cries of "Justice!" from crowds surrounding the Houses, and presenting it to the King, May 8.

V. i. **14.** *The King has signed the warrant:* three days later the King signed the bill.

ii. **1.** *O bell' andare:* Browning explained, in his preface of 1837, that "the Italian boat-song is from Redi's Bacco, long since naturalized in the joyous and delicate version of Leigh Hunt." While the play was rehearsing for its production at Covent Garden Theatre, Browning gave Macready a "lilt" which he had composed for the children's song in Act V. His object, says Miss Hickey, who first printed the music, by permission, in her "Strafford," "was just to give the children a thing children would croon; but the two professed singers, Master and Miss Walker, preferred something that should exhibit their powers more effectually, and a regular 'song' was substituted."





Strafford left a son and three daughters, the eldest, Anne, appearing here, and Arabella and his only son, William, having for their mother his second wife, Lady Arabella Hollis. His youngest daughter, Margaret, an infant at the time of his death, was the child of Elizabeth Rhodes. Anne married Edward Watson, Lord Rockingham, in 1654. William, the second Earl of Strafford, died in 1695, without children, ending the regular male succession of the Wentworths.

ii. **13.** *You were to sleep:* Anne's care-taking little character seems to be drawn in keeping with Sir William Pennyman's letter to Strafford, in the "Strafford Papers," i. 56. The children were left in his charge in Yorkshire, and he reported minutely: "Now to write that news . . . which . . . will be most acceptable, your lordship's children are all very well, and your lordship need not fear the going forward of your building, when you have so careful a steward as Mistress Anne [then three years old]. She complained to me very much of two rainy days, which, as she said, hindered her from coming down, and the building from going up, because she was inforced to keep her chamber, and could not overlook the workmen."

41. *The Ignoble Term . . . the Genius on his orb:* a rude bust on a square pillar representing the Roman god Term, who presided over boundaries. The *Genius*, an image of the guardian spirit, the Latin idea corresponding with the Greek, *daimōn genethlios*, presiding over destiny, represented as a beautiful boy in a chlamys, with the wings of a bird, the *Juno* or *Genius*, of a woman, as a draped maiden with moth or bat wings. Browning explained the allusion: "Suppose the enemies

of a man to have thrown down the image and replaced it by a mere *Term*, and you will have what I put in Strafford's head. Putting the Genius on the pedestal usurped, means — or tries to mean — substituting eventually the true notion of Strafford's endeavor and performance in the world, for what he conceives to be the ignoble and distorted conception of these by his contemporary judges."

64. "*Not so much as Constable*," etc.: "While the Bill of Attainder was on its way to the Lords the King went to that House and addressed them. . . . After beseeching them not to treat the Earl with severity, he concluded, 'I must confess for matters of misdemeanors, I am so clear in that, that though I will not chalk out the way, yet let me tell you that I do think my Lord Strafford is not fit to serve me or the Commonwealth in any place of trust, no, not so much as that of a constable; therefore I leave it to you my Lords to find some such way as to bring me out of this great strait, and keep ourselves and the kingdom from such inconveniences. Certainly he that thinks himself guilty of high treason in his conscience may condemn him of misdemeanor.'"

70. *Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond:* Strafford's early taste for country life, as shown in his letters to Sir George Calvert, James's Secretary of State, warrant these allusions: "Matter worthy your trouble these parts afford none where our objects and thoughts are limited in looking upon a tulip, hearing a bird sing . . . which for my part I begin to feed myself in, having, I praise God, recovered more in a day by an open country air than in a fortnight's time in that smothering one of London." Again, "A most fine season to make fish-ponds; our plums all gone and past, peaches, quinces, and grapes almost fully ripe. . . . These only we countrymen muse of . . . possessing ourselves in contentment."

71. *Garrard:* a clergyman who was engaged to furnish

him, when he was lord-deputy in Ireland, with monthly budgets of news of the Court and Town.

87. *Sejanus, Richelieu and what not:* an allusion to Eliot's famous denunciation of Buckingham in his impeachment in Parliament, 1629, when he drew a vivid parallel between the Duke and the favorite of the Emperor Tiberius, who was accused by the Roman Senate and strangled, A. D. 31. Strafford himself was accused, and perhaps himself cherished the thought, for he was familiar with French politics, of aiming to give Charles such power in England as Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642), prime minister of Louis XIII., gained for the Kings of France.

114. *Manœuvres to avoid the granting pardon:* "When the Bill of Attainder was passed the King sent to Hollis to know what he could do to save the Earl of Strafford. Hollis said that if the King pleased, since the execution of the law was in him, he might legally grant him a reprieve, which must be good in law, but he would not advise it. That which he proposed was, that Lord Strafford should send him a petition for a short respite, to settle his affairs and prepare for death, upon which he advised the King to come next day with the petition in his hands and lay it before the two Houses, with a speech which he drew for the King. And Hollis said to him, he would try his interest among his friends to get them to consent to it. . . . While Hollis and his party waited their time, the King suddenly resorted to a different scheme, and having, with tears in his eyes, signed the commission for giving assent to the bill, he sent the Lords a letter: — 'I did yesterday satisfy the justice of the kingdom by passing the Bill of Attainder against the Earl of Strafford; but mercy being as inherent and inseparable to a King as justice, I desire at this time, in some measure, to show that likewise, by suffering that unfortunate man to fulfil the natural course of his life in a close imprisonment, yet so if ever he make the least offer to escape, or offer directly or

indirectly to meddle in any sort of public business, especially with me, either by message or letter, it shall cost him his life without further process.' . . . The following was added in a postscript: 'If he must die, it were charity to reprieve him until Saturday.'"

122. *Like Prynne's:* William Prynne, pilloried and his ears and nose slit, on account of reflections in his "Histrio-Mastix, or The Players' Scourge," against Popery, women-actors, etc., construed as offences to Laud and to the Queen, who played in Court masques.

138. *I forgive him from my soul:* he wrote the King from prison in regard to the Bill of Attainder awaiting his signature: "Out of much sadness I am come to a resolution . . . to look upon that which is principally to be considered in itself, and that is doubtless the prosperity of your sacred person and the commonwealth. . . . To set your Majesty's conscience at liberty, I do most humbly beseech you for the preventing of such mischiefs as may happen by your refusal . . . to pass the Bill."

145. "*Strafford shall take no hurt,*" etc.: the King wrote to him in prison: "I cannot satisfy myself in honour or conscience without assuring you (now in the midst of your troubles) that upon the word of a king, you shall not suffer in life, honour, or fortune."

152. "*Put not your trust*": reputed to have been Strafford's actual words, quoting Psalm cxlvi. 3, and first given in 1658, in Sanderson's "Life and Reign of Charles," says Firth.

172. *Wandesford's dead:* Sir Christopher, Privy Councillor in Ireland and deputy in Strafford's absence, who is said to have died of grief on hearing of Strafford's arrest.

173. *Radcliffe:* see note **IV. ii. 56.** — *Laud's turn comes next:* beheaded on Tower Hill, January 10, 1645.

183. *Balfour:* Lieutenant of the Tower.

191. *Your Majesty may hear them now . . . some hundred thousand:* Forster (whose account of Strafford

was used by Browning, and who, indeed, helped his friend in writing it, if he did not write it himself, as Dr. Furnivall asserts) says: "Not less than 100,000 persons who had crowded in from all parts were visible on Tower-hill."

218. *St. Antholin's:* the church set aside by the Government to the use of the Scotch Commission, where Alexander Henderson preached to crowded congregations.

230. *Billingsley:* Captain Billingsley and one hundred men were to be allowed by Balfour to enter the Tower and effect Strafford's escape; but Balfour disclosed this plan of release to Pym.

272. *Who walked in youth with me,* etc.: besides the anecdote of the meeting in Greenwich in the Welwood "Memoirs," before referred to, there are references to the friendship between them in the speeches of Strafford, as recorded in the "Notebook of Sir John Northcote;" and Pym began his speech of November 24, 1640, against Strafford in the House by saying he had "long known the person charged by acts of friendship."

287. *David not more Jonathan:* 2 Samuel i. 19–27.

316. *He 's weak, and loves the Queen:* Gardiner writes that the "Councillors complained that the King was always in his wife's apartments. He said to her, 'I wish we could be always together, and you could accompany me to the Council; but what would people say if a woman were to busy herself with matters of government?' . . . He was excessively jealous of being supposed under the Queen's influence."

320. *Pym, you help England,* etc.: in first edition after lines **319-320** read, "Pym, save the King! Pym, save — stay — you shall | For you love England! I that am dying, think," instead of the present line, **320**, which suggests a closer accord with Foster's words: "Pym, no longer the mouth-piece of a faction that might be trampled on, but recognized as the chosen champion of the people of England: when Strafford had persuaded

himself that all this vision was a reality before him, we may feel that the sudden and subduing conviction forced itself on him that he had mistaken the true presentment of the principle of power which he worshipped, and that his genius should have had a different devotion."

360. *I shall die first:* on Wednesday, May 12, 1641. Within a few weeks the most severe consequences of his death to his children were mitigated. The King followed him to the scaffold January 30, 1649.

SORDELLO

Sordello is the story of a poet's inner development as affected by his social environment.

The first step in this development is taken when the troubadour-knight, Sordello, awakes from the dream-life (described in **Book I.**) spent in the old castle and woods of Goito, during which he exerted his powers of imagination within himself and for his private pleasure, to feel that this lonely exercise is insufficient.

The second step follows (described in **Book II.**), when suddenly brought into contact with the outside world at Palma's Court of Love, where he wins the crown from Eglamor; and thereafter exerting his powers over his fellows, as a minstrel in Mantua, he comes to find that his skill is insufficient to keep himself supreme, while he sways others for his own pleasure, so as to make them recognize in him the power behind his song; the attempt to assert himself through his poetry finally bringing himself and his art into utter conflict.

The third step is taken when, after abandoning this self-confusing process, he seeks loneliness with nature at Goito once more, and determines (as described in **Book III.**) to experience life itself now instead of living merely for art's sake. Being summoned by Palma to Verona and a life of action, he resolves, under her in-

spiration, to make his art tributary to the life of others instead of making them, through his art, tributary to him.

The fourth step (described in **Book IV.**) follows as a result of his new contact, at Ferrara, with two unreconciled social influences: the career of power exemplified in Salinguerra, and the suffering life of the people. Having determined to devote himself to uplifting the masses, it devolves upon him to find an efficient way to serve them. Concluding that the Guelf and Ghibellin policy are equally hard upon them, the only solution of the question he finds is the suggestion Rome gives of a universal and continuing city sheltering all mankind.

Pursuing this clew toward a way of serving the people, he seeks to act upon it (in **Book V.**) by reconciling the two opposite influences he has just recognized, attempting to use his poetic gift to persuade Salinguerra to champion the Guelf cause, since that serves Rome's. In doing this, Salinguerra's sudden conferring of the Emperor's badge upon Sordello, and Palma's revelation that he is Salinguerra's son, brings upon himself the burden of the decision he is urging upon the old soldier.

Sordello's struggle over this decision (described in **Book VI.**) results, finally, in a conquest over his own personal self-seeking, and he dies stamping the Imperial badge beneath his foot, but in a failure to seize the one chance of centuries, to pacify the war of Barons against People, to reconcile in his own person the conflicting influences of individual and social welfare.

Book I. The poet, appealing to all who desire to hear the story of Sordello, declares the theme and its historic time, warning his hearers that the narrative method is not the one he would himself have chosen, but rather the dramatic, which after he had introduced his hero would permit him to step back and with his audience watch the story's progress. But since it is objected that it is better for a writer personally to direct and explain a subject when it is unusual, he resolves for once

to face his audience. And since Fate has already shown him some spite, yet cannot decree silence or song because of there being none or many to listen, although she may now accord him but a few friends among the living, he will enlarge his audience by summoning a ghostly host of his poetical predecessors. Next to a living critic, he fancies, for instance is — He breaks off, declaring that he will not tease any one of the poet sprites by giving the name. About to describe the scene of the story, he speaks of Verona, and seems to see Shelley's spirit draw closer as if attracted by the Italian name, and he stops short to beg his indulgent withdrawal, as if the consciousness of his presence would make the others seem nearer and more formidable, and the poet's task more presumptuous.

After this more personal exordium (**1-73**), a prologue follows (**73-373**), presenting the stage on which the poem is to take place. From the darkness of the past the outlines of a city appear: Verona, six hundred years ago, Frederick II. being the Emperor of Germany, Honorius III. the Pope. A historic scene is then put before the eye which presents both dramatically and pictorially the political situation of the time: An autumn sunset is dying out over the distant forests, but one eye in Verona caring for it however, for the townfolk are swarming in the market-place, absorbed in the news messengers have just brought of the capture of their Prince, Count Richard, the ally of Azzo, leader of the Pope's party, who has been trapped by Salinguerra, the general of Ecelin, leader of the Emperor's party. This news calls for an immediate uprising of Verona and all the cities of northern Italy allied with the Papal side to release Richard. One of his followers grumbles against Azzo's leadership, which is to blame, as he supposes, for the mishap. An Estian interrupts him to defend Azzo's right. An envoy tells, with graphic detail, the whole story of the conflict resulting in Richard's capture. All these excited snatches of talk give the aspect of the

time, and this event in particular as told in old chronicles written but a few years afterward, when the Emperor really did do what Honorius feared he would, — give up pretending any friendship either for the Pope or King John of Jerusalem, and actually did receive the excommunication so long hanging over his head. All Lombardy, seeing in this capture of Richard a portent of the anticipated contest, is taking up arms and siding either with Pope or Emperor. The political situation is then more philosophically summed up in a poetic metaphor representing the Ghibellin barons as cliffs, which the violent throes of war, like an earthquake, had permitted to rear themselves above the mid-sea, the chaos of mediæval Italy. These, the choke-weed of closely related general life, the leagued Guelf interests of Italy, had so grown over as almost to confound, unless just such a second shock as the Emperor's coming, should hurl off the strangling choke-weed and let the cliffs jut boldly out again. The shock that would thus befriend the cliffs would bruise the people, the Guelf choke-weed, pitilessly, but it would also let the sunlight through, and make possible the organization of still another crop of choke-weed growth. This would knit itself over the breach, under the Papal protection, until the whole should be able to sustain some future growth, as yet unguessed, which might enlace the whole surface, making it solid and unified. These two opposing Ghibellin and Guelf elements of the political situation are then presented again less symbolically and more succinctly in an account of the origin and characteristics of their respective leaders, — Ecelin, the hill-cat, with his lieutenant, Salinguerra, and Azzo, the Guelf lion. After this comes a glimpse of the hero amid this environment. A scene inside the palace is given, where the Council of Ferrara is sitting debating the action to be immediately taken on Richard's behalf, and where in an inner chamber reclines a man who is rapt in the consciousness of the words he has been hearing from a

woman who has just passed behind the arras. Morning breaks upon him as he shakes off his stupor and rises, as if to some purpose of import to Lombardy.

It is Sordello, the forerunner of Dante, whose larger brilliance has preserved the lesser poet's name, but in whose splendid light and fame the slighter personality is mixed and almost lost. The poet's purpose in the present poem is now declared. It is to disentwine from its greater companion's life and light that slender part belonging to Dante's predecessor, to which the poet of the "Divine Comedy" himself gives the clew.

The prologue thus preparing the reader to grasp the (1) historical setting, (2) the main personages, and (3) the purpose of the story, being now concluded, the story itself begins.

It opens thirty years earlier than the exciting scene in Verona presented in the prologue, in Mantua, among the woods and marshes round a castle of Goito, within whose maze of corridors, stairways, and galleries, in a central room of carven wood, vaulted and pillared, beside a fort of sculptured marble, the hero is seen again as a boy, sensitively delighting in the beauty of the sculptured figures upholding the marble font, or in the birds and vineyards out of doors, or on stormy winter days in the house again gazing at the portraits of the Ecelin family broidered on the wall-hangings. One glance at the susceptable face reveals his poet-nature, desiring beauty after beauty and blending its own existence with all that it desires and so making it thrill with life. Of such natures there are two classes, one confusing its own life with whatever objects it finds beautiful and desirable, the other keeping itself consciously distinct from every external excellence. Aware that every sensation or impression belongs to itself, and that itself is the controlling source of every such impression, its own individuality is stamped on every phenomenon regarded by the other class as external. So, having such potency, such souls challenge

all life to elicit and enlarge themselves, and are capable of growing to any height, and showing other men how they also may so develop the germ of latent energy within them. In pursuing such high missions they are subject, however, either to think the labor too large for life's scope, and so remain aloof from the world and idle, or to attempt to force the whole labor, large enough for an eternity, within the narrow space of present life. This latter difficulty, the poet hints, will prove to be Sordello's; but he deprecates fastening this cause of failure upon him at the very outset, where he stands at the threshold at the thirteenth century, in the morning glow preluding the splendor of the Renaissance. Rather let the failure, of which this glimpse is caught, be shut from sight as in a coffer, sacred to a shrine, until the time comes to learn the reality, and follow meanwhile the pleasant course of Sordello's life, which ever since he could remember passed smoothly in his Mantuan paradise.

There, tended by aged foreign women-servants, his fancy grew, sucking out all the nourishment for it which this sphere of his existence could supply, spinning his imaginations to link every object in his world with every event that gave his mind a personality to associate it with, while himself serenely in the midst of all, watchful of his own work and enjoying it. The outside world, which seems so bent upon rudely destroying structures made of dreams like these, by introducing such disturbing factors of morality as grief and pain, did not reach Sordello's solitude; and since the sorrows of the woodland, a windfallen heron's nest or a dead fawn, were not enough to break the boy's trance, there was no sign in his life of the turbulent moments which a Naddo crudely supposes to be necessarily incident to the birth of genius. Only Time at last brought into his content a disturbing element. That taught him to discriminate between the ecstasy a blooming poppy, for instance, could occasion before the autumn rains left it bare,

which made him seem one with it in its beauty, and the pleasures he craved to have within himself, concentrating upon himself such sympathy and getting such joy from it as he had got before from the thousand objects upon which he had poured out his sympathy.

Love, the poet interjects here, is without such self-seeking; its desire is sufficient unto itself, and can bear no examining audience; yet, ever unsatiate, it finds perpetual delight in exalting its devotion apart from itself.

Sordello, on the contrary, finds pleasure in his own will to find it, and desires a crowd to exercise his will upon and to certify to his ability. "Vanity," Naddo says. Sordello contrived such a crowd, not only from the serving-women, the paintings and sculptures of the castle, a glimpse of a troop of archers, of Adelaide, the lady of the castle, bent over a scroll, with a blue-eyed girl at her knee, but from every sort of personality to be gained from song or chronicle, all of which he no longer attaches now to trees or flowers, but makes independently alive. Then, studying what rôles they think good, he seeks himself to enact them supremely. At first, supposing himself resting in his tent, or wielding a sword like Ecelin, the Emperor's Vicar, he comes in time to fancy himself darting no real rough arrow from a bow that makes his arms ache, but an invincible golden shaft. Last of all, he selects and combines what is most graceful and most strong, passing to the impersonation of the Emporer or the poet Eglamor, and ultimately to Apollo himself, as concentring all excellence, and therefore being the part he chooses to play, with Palma, the daughter of Ecelin and Agnes Este, for his Daphne. Finally, as time passes, he finds his most superlative fancies of life insufficient. Yet, but for an accident, nothing might have broken Sordello's solitude. Taurello leaves Mantua; thereupon Adelaide goes back there, as she always does, when he is not there; when he is there she returns to Goito. Through no distrust of him, however, for together they unite to keep Ecelin in

hand and firm for the Emperor's coming. From his court in Sicily and from Provence a band of Troubadours and Trouveres come to Mantua, introduced by Taurello; and now that Adelaide is at Mantua again, start up their games there anew. From this grows the accident which abruptly opens up the world to Sordello.

Book II. With the coming of spring, Sordello wanders farther than usual in the restless pursuit of his visionary realities, — Palma to love him, Richard to envy, — and suddenly, pushing his way through a wood, all comes true. He is in the presence of a throng of actual men and women, holding a Court of Love round a pavilion, with Palma in the midst waiting to adjudge the laurel crown. Eglamor, Richard's best minstrel, sings a tale of Apollo. Sordello, dizzy to find that he knows it better, takes the words from the other's lips as he closes, sings the song, and gains the prize, swooning as he recognizes Adelaide, and sees the very girl he had once caught a glimpse of, bending over him to crown him and place her scarf about him. The Jongleurs and Trouveres bear him back to Goito in triumph. Palma chooses him for her minstrel. Sordello spends a week in tasting the sweet of it, his triumph leading him to conjecture what song means to Eglamor, to the crowd, and to the Trouveres and judges, in comparison with what it is to him. Upon him, thus engaged in Goito woods, breaks the burial train of Eglamor. He has been, as a poet, the opposite of Sordello; his life merged in his art, which was to him a worshipful thing, far above him, and to which he was privileged to be a ministrant. Forced by his failure from his supremacy in the service of poesy, this gentle but ardent spirit accepted his defeat with homage to Sordello as his master, and, losing all hold on life, died before morning. As Naddo and his fellows, reciting his luckless ode, lower him in his grave, Sordello is moved to a new experience of a joy arising from weakness instead of strength, as he dedicated his own fame to the memory of the defeated poet, and, laying his crown

on the quiet breast, makes it fitter than before for his own wearing, as if a new gentleness enriched his poetic faculty.

• Spring wore on, and with the coming of May Sordello could no longer refrain from verifying a rumor of his origin which had reached him. The story of it now told him was that he was the child of an archer who had perished in the attack upon Ecelin, in which he had saved Adelaide and the young Ecelin, leaving his son, Sordello, to be gratefully reared by his chief's family in Adelaide's private retreat. The supremacy for which his soul hungered and the difference he felt between himself and other men could thenceforth have no basis but that his own will resolved to give them. He would devote his faculties henceforward to no single aim of strength or wisdom or love, to these subordinating his soul, but to the conscious perception and enjoyment of all of these in any manifestation. To this "grace of seeing grace" he would free his soul, and thus, himself greater than any great one, challenge universal homage.

The poet here interposes the comment that to play the god till some slight accident lays him low is well enough; but discovering so much to avail himself of in life as this, why not discover, too, the weakness implied in desiring other men to know that he knows so much?

Sordello decides to attest his capacity before men by showing them, through song alone, that there is no desire or act of theirs which is not his in its utmost range and perfectness, and thus to attract and deserve their admiration. Neither strength nor grace nor wisdom should alone find its best outlet in his verse, but his verse should be responsive to all, from the least to the greatest, like a bowlder so sensitively poised that on one key it will vibrate in answer to any kind of sound. To such an ambition as this no event is inopportune, the bloody broils of the year are no detriment, and any day will suit for beginning his career, the poet reminds him.

Sordello enjoys reading over and over Naddo's letter

urging him to come to Mantua. When he goes he revels in the coterie awaiting him, his fame — applause and envy, too — so pushing him on to satisfy demands, that song itself seems a small thing beside its effect. Naddo, delightedly perceiving the effectiveness of his song, hails him as the true bard, building on man's common nature. Sordello, knowing how much the desire for effectiveness has had to do with his genius in the songs approved, has a lurking doubt. What struck the people so in his songs, students of poetics can scarcely comprehend, the poet affirms, for all their research into Troubadour verse. Sordello took from the chaos of life about him some elemental action, gave it a transforming touch or two, made it stand for this or that good or bad personal quality, and was so immediately successful that the naïve questions of his hearers, taking it all as if it were real, made him feel that such limited unconscious joy as theirs in life itself were more enviable than his own lofty forswearing of any special pleasures for love of them all.

Laughing at himself the next moment for having been swung aside from his purpose by a little applause while on his way toward it, he then asks himself if he cannot do better than contrive a partial pageantry of human traits, ascending from that to the creation of complete men. No sooner did he begin imagining these, however, then he left this to adapt better to his purpose the mould for these imaginings — his language. He welded words from the common speech around him into his Latin material till he had a product which came in time to be esteemed more highly than the Roman stock melted to make it. This done, he chose a deed and its performers, lived in each one of them, from each one so producing a separate creature, which he proceeded to equip in his new-wrought language. But when the Mantuans were called to listen and applaud, they failed to get the single whole result at which he had aimed, because they were not able to follow his perception through the many thoughts by which it was pieced together; since ex-

pression by means of language is necessarily made up of many parts which take the place of thought, but do not carry it on continuously, unless throughout all parts of it the unifying intelligence passes along, reconstructing as complete a perception as that which caused it to be constructed. It is quite as hard, therefore, to find a Muse as to become Apollo. And since he could in himself be all he tried to present so unsuccessfully, and since the Mantuans were not likely to imagine the possibility of a higher form of art than that they had already praised, he abandoned the attempt to find a vehicle that would convey it better.

In celebrating a popular hero, he found again that his audiences never dreamed of penetrating beneath the hero to his maker. They cared nothing for his will in the creation of Simon de Montfort, but only for that hero himself. So he turned scornfully upon them all, glorifying his old simpler days in comparison, and thinking it useless to continue to seek through men for the self-display he craved. The unity of his life was now broken. What he, as man, expected to get out of his faculty as a poet, clashed with that faculty and hindered his progress either toward the satisfaction of his personal desire or the expansion of his poetic ability. His poetic side, no longer deluded about the results it actually got from song, felt at liberty to try itself on any fancy or catch at any petty opening to exercise itself, with a hungry eagerness only whetted the more by its determination to be satisfied with nothing short of the entire attainment of the lofty desire it still cherished, persistently believing that the wished-for prize would yet befall it on some unexpected day and free it at last from any imputation of contempt from the man-side of the poet for the meagre results it gained; since the man-side was not to be appeased with mere self-reflecting of the poetic side of him, no matter how pretentious in appearance. Meanwhile, what was it but just his present pitiably self-defeated self, and not the master-

fully victorious imagined self, which launched its fancies forth in any guise, making no pretence at lordship, nor waiting for it, nor laying any claim to inspiration? So the man-side of the poet restricted his poetic side even in its own peculiar gift of devotion to verse, which might fall into a still barer state for all it actually effected toward its aim. For the constant exercise of his art, while it elicited the growth of his inner self, and thus might become capable of convincing all manner of men that he was their master when it had fully developed the inner self, made it now become no more than a make-shift, expression being but the finest of tools, and only the formal part of song being left him. It was as if Apollo had cast aside the power and reach of poetry (symbolized here as quiver and bow) and kept only the instrument for sound (the lyre). Instead of spending his time in conceiving, his whole day's work went into the elaboration of poetical technique. So the merely human side of him hampered his poetic development, constantly intervening between him and his work to deter him from any labor not calculated to make the outcome suit his Mantuan audience, and so get just the sort of reward due to it! The complete Sordello, man and bard blent in one, was utterly destroyed.

He took refuge in conventionalities, wondering uneasily if it were better to keep on or break bounds both as a man and as a poet, but deferring to public opinion. In talking, he had to depend upon the guess of the moment. If he put some sudden question to his real self, the large answer he would form in reply included unrecognizably the material out of which the smaller conclusions were formed — raw notions and old saws — to which the people about him were accustomed, and through which only could they understand his answer. And if, realizing this, he sought to translate his thought into words such as he might guess they would apprehend and approve, the moment had slipped by. He would be able to strike the lyre of speech as well as verse

adroitly, too, if he could have a scope of time to match his scope of hand. It would take a lifetime to answer some question of a Naddo, framing his reply so that it would be accommodated to Naddo's way of looking at things. Disgusted at the futility of it, he cared not how he answered; and the praise or blame he got when he spoke were alike only awards upon temporary dexterity, not upon any underlying quality. That grew less and less to concern him in speech also, as well as in song. And as for the men whose awards he sought, whose desires and actions he sang, they were of less and less interest to him. Yet the passive plan he hailed as practicable he could not prevent himself from scorning.

Having come to this pass as a man, as a poet his work just managed not to stop altogether, his daily effort being only not to fall beneath that of his rivals. With a poet whose manner was pure unadornment (a Bocafoli) or a poet whose manner was elaboration (a Plara) he might compete; but what alone would seem worth while to him, as he sings in exemplification of his meaning, would be to put in one song a single sight; but his hand, too strong to pluck only one flower-cup in the moat, with one twitch could pull up soil and root as well as stalk and leaf and cup. Naddo objects that this is precisely the error of Squarcialupe, a poet who cannot be content with telling a story merely, but must blend a philosophic problem with it, whereas the poet's proper province is the common heart. On that the first poetry was built. That heart, of course, is not any sort of a heart, not the heart of genius, but just the calm and healthy sort of heart. As to the fire that rankles at the heart of every globe, the sense of power that pushes poetic genius to a special ardor of achievement, — best hide all that, counsels Naddo. And other such accomplished connoisseurs of poetry, Pappacodas, Tagliafers, joined with him to praise or censure Sordello. That "monarch of mankind" seemed to have no choice but apparent conformity or useless opposition to them, and

no comfort but to think out by himself his own thoughts. Even in so far as he conformed to their opinions he made constant errors, not realizing in what a small degree they followed his course, and in how small a space their criticisms, which he attempted to meet, were applicable. For example, in imagining a theme, his larger conceptive will was palsied in its moments of creation, by his intermediate effecting will in its choice of means, and he lost the art of creating. So that, if he meant to sing of some Mantuan baron, reckless in gallantries, the critic's caution to content oneself with body and abjure the soul, would occur to him, till, modelling his figure on this low plan, he would find some spiritual force necessary to bring it out and contrast it with; and then the simple baron he began to make would grow into a complex sort of Apollo and the whole figure would collapse. Or the opposite would happen; the sight of some rough peasant figure in the crowd around Ecelin, scornful of the pretty externalities of the poet's dress, would lead him to construct some image of pure soul, till, conscious that passions were lacking to foil the ethereality, his idea would drop to pieces again.

At this time, Adelaide falling sick, the house of Ecelin missed her governing hand. Old Ecelin lost heart, and fell deeper into the clutches of the Church. He writes Salinguerra of the betrothal of his sons, one to Beatrix, Este's sister, and the other to Richard's Giglia, and of Palma as Richard's prospective bride, these alliances joining the Ghibellin and Guelf parties. This, with the news of Adelaide's death, reached Taurello as he was about to sail with the Emperor to the Crusades. At once he set out, but reached Ecelin's side only to find that the marriages of the sons had been consummated, that Ecelin was himself absorbed in making his peace with the Church before dying, and that Palma only was left him at Goito. To Mantua, then, journeyed Taurello, whither he had never returned, so rumor went, while he was satisfied with Ecelin, since the death of his wife,

Retrude, with whom he had lived in Mantua awaiting the completion of the palace and garden built for her in Ferrara, which she never lived to see. But Mantua had never lost her pride in him, whose family was one of her most illustrious, and preparations to greet him ceremoniously were on foot.

Naddo advises Sordello what a competition for the leadership this will offer him over his rival poets. This makes Sordello's power to sing no easier.

Time passes. Taurello will arrive next day, and Sordello is still unready. Reckless, dumb, he wanders off till evening over hill-tops and through dark gorges. Refuge at Goito he finds at last, eagerly returning, torch in hand, to see again the maple chamber and the sculptured font. Palma was gone that day, the serving-woman told him. Merely as body, from the first he has proved unfit; as a will demonstrating and reflecting mankind, was he now proved equally unfit? Pressing close beside the font, he murmured, "I shall be king again." Into the font he threw his crown. The scarf he took out again.

"Why is there no Poet?" asked Taurello next day at Mantua, when the masque ended. Excuses made for the "tetchy race," the good-humored soldier accepted them, and turned to the bull-bait next on the day's programme.

Book III. Refuged once more at Goito with nature, Sordello's own life was born anew, all stains effaced, and all influences upon him of the lives and ways of others in Mantua dying gradually away. Of the world of men, he hears the last. That social machine, thought-fed, to get self-knowledge by, he had sought by forcing half himself upon — like some godlike impulse wreaking itself on mere clay which it could disturb but not change, — to enjoy with the other half of himself. His own life now ebbs back from it, recoiling upon itself forever. Better be quite unrevealed by men than only partially revealed, he thinks. But what, then, is the

use of having a will to be educed, and to effect one's desires? What is to be made of his need to become all natures yet retain his own? Merely his own peace and pleasure? A year passes in receiving, not searching; yet throughout it he was aware that he was resting, and so did not quite rest; till one morning the very nature on whose broad tranquillity he was resting complacently was subject to a shock. The marsh quaked and disappeared. A broad water stood in its place. Nature herself, then, was, like himself, a child of fate. But nature, he thought, has infinite time to change, mistake, and alter, while I have but my one life. To renounce life and struggle means to despair, he realizes now, and for despair he is not ready. His heart claims the multifarious experiences and pleasures his fancy successively lights upon, — strollings at evenings with some hard-won Elys; mixing in the Emperor Frederick's revelry at the Sicilian Court; choosing Oriental treasures for St. Mark's with the Doge of Venice and his friends; all such things, he sees now, are but as the rounds of a ladder by which his nature could expand in the appreciation of pleasure. The mass of men, he concludes, are framed with Being distinct from Seeing, however little they may *be* or *see*. Happiness is to feed Being with Perceiving; and to become what is perceived, perpetually turning the Alien to soul or body into the Native, is the use of Life. His body desiring a Palma, instructs him; so his soul kept afar from a world would think it happiness to make it one with himself. His will, he thinks, already has made the world not alien, but his means do not correspond with his will to make it native to himself. He determines to try himself to do what others may come to do in another age; asks himself why he left Mantua, complaining that his will was fettered when he could try for the means to stretch its tether and did not, and was such a fool as to prefer elaborating in the dark any material of life left him by his predecessors when he could evoke it himself with one stroke.

A lyrical expression of his mood follows: he likens himself to a man lost in a drowsy love-scene, while just outside the shrubbery that screens him a pageant passes never again to be repeated, and he is coaxed and cosseted, and told how hard it is to do anything else while the show fleets out of sight. Better a blasted bud that shows rudiments of the full flower than the dormant lotus bulb in the hand of the mummy Taurello brought.

Naddo interrupts him, repeating the name he hears, and then tells him Palma has sent for him, and gives him the news of the world, for which, to his surprise, Sordello eagerly asks. Ecelin has played Taurello an astounding trick, divided his property between his two boys, Ecelin and Alberic, and gone into a convent. The boys both wed Guelfs, and Palma is betrothed to Richard at Verona, and probably what they want of Sordello now is to make them a marriage-song before Richard seizes Ferrara, for the Guelfs having pillaged it in Taurello's absence, and Taurello having returned and taken revenge, Azzo and Richard were now attempting to get the city back again. Just as soon as that was done, the Count, allied to Palma and absorbing the Romano interest, would be free to rule Naddo adds the suggestion that Sordello take these doings as the theme of his song at Verona, and conc udes by asking what message he shall take back to Palma. To his surprise, Sordello answers that he will set out at once.

The next day, at evening, he reaches Verona — the moment and the scene sketched at the opening of the poem have arrived — the people gathering in the street, hearing the news of Taurello's (the osprey's) sudden swoop on Este and Richard (lynx and ounce), and the capture of Richard while besieging the city on the eve of his marriage, while Ghibellins and Guelfs alike throughout all Italy were agitated over the threat of the Emperor's descent upon them.

In the palace Sordello and Palma meet at last, their

stories best told to each other at first by the pleasure of being hand in hand and arm in arm, till after the announcement of the sending of succor to Richard reaches them, and they watch the assemblage in the street below, hear the alarum, and the soldiers marching. Then, again, together alone, Palma tells Sordello how her life had reserved its force, while Sordello was testing his on nature, waiting for some out-soul whose will should be effective to shape and direct that force. Her description of her longing for such an out-soul to love runs into a little lyric; then she tells him how at the love court in Mantua she had gladly recognized in the successful poet the youth of the maple chamber whom she had already set her heart upon, and how the approval of his ability by the world had sealed to him her own favor, and constituted him the instrument of her ambition. Adelaide, she saw, had such power over Ecelin, who would come where she sat scheming, grumbling, and doubtful, till she directed and inspirited him anew to his tasks for his family's aggrandizement, and she envied her the prompt, able service always at her command in Taurello also; but how, she asked herself, could she ever make Sordello the executant of her plans for her family over the heads of Ecelin and his two sons, and against the authority of both Adelaide and Taurello? Suddenly came Adelaide's illness, and ere she died, she cast herself upon Palma's breast, revealing all the schemes and secrets of her past; and Ecelin, rushing in, turned from the stiff corse to her, instead, for the wonted stimulus and advice, and then in the same breath declared he would break away from all his harassments despite Taurello's will or Frederick's. And soon enough she learned what that meant, — Guelf alliances for his children, the monastery for himself. No less bent upon the devotion to love and power which she had chosen, her way was still dim, however, till Taurello came to put the whole situation and the Romano policy clearly before her, show her the career two

generations had marked out for the Romano aim, and ask her whether she will stand as head of her house, — her father having now forsaken both it and her, — and do for the Emperor what Matilda had done for the Pope. He stood ready to serve her as he had her father. He brought her then from Goito to Mantua, where they heard of the excommunication of the Emperor and the progress of the Este alliances, including Richard's suit for Palma herself, awaiting merely, Taurello advised, some rash step on the Guelf side which they could turn to their advantage; Palma only, as Agnès Este's child, and not all Romano, being still the link between them. On the very day of her betrothal to Richard, the Este side attacked Ferrara; and the day Palma made her journey to Verona to carry out the betrothal agreed upon, Richard laid siege to Ferrara; thus, by Taurello's policy, being enabled, since they were ready in Verona to complete or annul the formal agreement, to put the whole blame for his after action against the agreement upon Richard. Ecelin had now been in Oliero monastery a month, but Taurello sent him word of all this, and of the capture of Richard, and asked his will, as head of the house. Ecelin having replied that neither he nor his sons would undertake any more strife for the Emperor Frederick; therefore she, Palma, takes the place in their stead, and sending for Sordello proposes that despite the League's armament, they go on together ahead of the arbitrators to Ferrara, where she trusts Taurello may show Sordello still further how to make the Emperor's cause his own. She goes leaving Sordello lost in reverie, as in the picture introducing him at the opening of the poem. From this musing dream he rises as day breaks, resolved to be the soul needed for this body, servant of the people's blind desires, and keeper of the Lombard pass, the highway between Italy and the Emperor.

The poet explains that he has now brought Sordello, when he hails the crowd's outcry and determines to take

an active part in events, to the completion of one circle in his life. Sordello has found that a single soul, however strong, is insufficient for its own delight, "both in corporeal organs and in skill," — that is, both physically to do all it desires, and artistically to imagine their more perfect attainment; being neither muscular enough to equal his ideals and excel all bowmen, for example, in shooting an arrow, nor skilled enough in fancy to satisfy himself completely with dreams of directing a perfect magical shaft He has, also, next found that it is insufficient to acquaint other men with his Will, "oblige them recognize the Hid by the Revealed," that is, force them to acknowledge the full inner power of his soul by what it is able to produce in work as proof of it. This second but not least difficult stage of experience passed, his Will "he bade abdicate," etc., — that is, he gave up trying to attain its pleasure, only to find he could not suppress or force it into giving up its control over him, — because it was an integral part of his very being, death and despair being the result of having none, as he realized at Goito when the marsh was swallowed up, — he, therefore, now permits it to remain. His Will may now again, at least, lead him to enjoy the varied world of man, although he is no longer deluded about men, and declares them "incapable of knowledge the first way," that is, unable to understand from what he does what he would do, as he had at first hoped, nor "fit to render incidentally tribute connived at, etc.," that is, unqualified to reward him even when indulgently humored, as now, little being expected of them but what comes in the way, and that which is pleasurable being taken as the only tribute from them which he is likely to get. If he was now "with warrant to rescind the ignominious exile of mankind," — that is, warranted in taking back the sentence he had pronounced against the world when he withdrew to Goito and banished from his mind any care for his fellows, — their real service to him would be to make him successful in causing them

to act, instead of to make them watch him acting their parts for them. This service, "ascertained intact as yet," — that is, perceived by him as a whole, not yet touched or tried, — "was to secure," — that is, was as yet ahead of him, a thing he was to secure. If it seemed imminent while he was listening to Palma, she was the one to be thanked, — she, Verona's lady.

The legend that Verona was founded by Brennus supplies the metaphor which follows, of the sun rising as a portent of triumph upon Sordello as he is dreaming of his next step in life; the reference to Manlius, who defeated Brennus, later, giving a hint that all will not fall so smooth, after all.

A long digression from the story put in the poet's own mouth follows. It is introduced by a simile, comparing his telling his story and then turning aside from it for a personal word to a "transcendental platan," some strange tree a magician conjures up for a girl queen, which she sees shoot up from the trunk to its bower of leaves and then burst out in flower only to fall in dust, while she turns to wonder at the old magician, who lies near by tranced and dozing. Scarcely has he imaged himself as a sleeping maker of the poem than he calls that part of the similitude back as unfit. Not as a mage asleep does his soul fare forth over the lagune, setting aside its prerogative of losing itself in his work, but as a god gliding away from the world it has been peopling, leaving it silent behind him, or returning into it again, himself aware all the time. So he now leaves his creatures sleeping while awake himself.

In such songs as Eglamor, for example, wrote, completeness may be found, for his achievement was all he saw in song to be achieved, and his whole life fed his art; but in "true works," that is, acts of will, like Sordello's dreamed-of works, the life and desire of the artist are larger than his accomplishment, and all that he creates betrays that under life, as in his poem on "Charlemagne," which implies that it is but an incident

of a larger life and another projected attainment; or like a sailor's story of a voyage when he is becalmed, and he stops in the midst of a tale taking one swiftly along, to ask if a breeze has sprung up, and sets you in the midst of reality again.

All this the poet now says he himself is fancying as he sits on a palace-step in Venice, and he asks himself who can do for his Will, which is not, alas! a Sordello's, what Palma has just done for that minstrel. The market girls and women of the people about him, — what 's to hinder him from making queens of them to instigate him to the conclusion of his poem?

While he is portraying these picturesque figures, a melancholy sprite of former dreams appears, and by her presence admonishes him of his old purpose, as if she were jealous lest he lose his hold upon it. He reminds her, in self-defence, that these very peasant-women are included in that purpose, but acknowledges that they have modified it a little. He asks for the oppressed ones of the world now only what these have, — youth, strength, and health, — opportunity, that is (since the whole passage is poetically symbolic), instead of actual spiritual attainment, — the prowess of chiefs, the craft of bards. Long ago in England he had craved all good for them; now he would not debar them from the whole of life, good with evil. Venice is a type of life, and it is in life, as in learning what Venice is, — as well limit him to stones he will not slip on, and canals not choked up, as hinder any one in life from the mixed evil with good. Only, let all the steps necessary to complete a process be taken! Take all happy persons, peasants or queens, then, as proofs of what all the unhappy persons kept in corners now might come in due time to enjoy. Just that, he declares, was his project, — namely, to speak for the right of all to happiness, which he scarcely begins to do before his old Muse visits him with distrust. To think *he* has been faltering! But although his nagging mistress has a habit of tiring out

her champions with unattractive piteousness, he who is her real friend and not her slave is all the more attached to her service, he prefers her blemished beauty, and loves her more than the piece of perfection who was once his love until a voice came bidding him, "Let others search." Since then his sufficient inspiration to his life's work was found in taking his race as his mistress, in that one face absorbing all individual faces. So he challenges her if he does not know her wants best, after all. His poem is roughly clad, with no ornaments save an occasional rag or tassel of poetic metaphor, as if to show that they are not without good cheer at heart, but otherwise "careless go alone," etc., — that is, reckless of appearance, attracting few eyes, little attention from the world; which is sad, but must be accepted. This being the case, it is to be seen whether his lady will not recognize him as her likeliest friend and helper, after all, and pass the gay crowd at the church-door — "the mass before the Basilic," and come to him for alms. Then he begs her to assume some grace of manner, nor think he is speaking ironically when he calls her ravishing, for he little regrets that she whom he fancied statuesquely majestic, "whose early foot was set forth as she 'd plant it on a pedestal," seems now, as he sits there in the quiet city of Venice, to fall upon him like a vapor taking shape as a pitiful form with quivering lip and meek tearful eyes. Warped souls and bodies of humanity! Yet God's purpose for them was means of growth strong and capable, "Yet God spoke of right-hand, foot, and eye;" and God selects for poets, vowed as he and his Sordello are, the burden they resolve to take on humanity's behalf. Following out the symbol, then, he calls oppressed humanity, his Lady, to rest in his arms, nor be disturbed by the talk of superior moralist, against whose unfavorable judgment of man's hopeless tendency to evil they will yet manage to show the innate value. In spite of abusing the abused evil, they will ask if the worst man does not keep a notion of

good which he retains for his own advantage, and consider himself justified in trying to secure by means of evil worked on others? and then they will assert that, if so, all men seem to think others better than themselves, since they trust all those they wrong, by taking advantage of them, while really (so the poet and his Muse will argue) they think all men stupider than they are, since they suppose none but they are capable of understanding their complicated scheme of action by which they make amends to themselves for their evil, through practising on the ignorance of others to bring about some special good for themselves. To which, if it be rejoined that this is but a slight clearing up of the difficulty, since it only proves the reason for the illness every one dies of, the poet answers (for misused humanity, his mistress or Muse) that at least if one can't help sharing in the common fault, one can avoid being unaware that it is so and increasing the general ignorance of the real state of the case by declaring always that some absolute good, some water of life dispensed unsparingly, would cure all — so easy to dispense, too, when the knowledge of the very cause of all troubles is laid bare! Meantime (so the poet supposes some pretender to the philosophic knowledge of absolute good to sing complacently) just study my madrigal on the water of life in the mugwort! Then the poet breaks out in fiercer irony against one who talks glibly of founts when all mankind is suffering drought in the desert, and calls upon the people to throw potsherds at him while he, their own prophet, strikes the rock, although by doing it he will, like Moses, forego the promised land and himself be miscalled a "Metaphysic Poet;" but when the bitter waters flow, already oozing out, and they quaff, let them remember who explained (in the like case in regard to Moses) — He is here interrupted by one who accuses him of presumption. He explains, however, that he is not the one who has magnified his office of poet for humanity, since he simply regards any

such office as the service each person is good for, to himself and in the general scheme; as if each contributed some cog or valve towards the building of an engine which when constructed, itself of no consequence, is only valuable for what it can do, and till it is completed, long hence, every sort of faculty must be spent upon it.

So, at present, the separate offices of those "nor blind nor dumb" — that is, of those who can see and express, namely, poets — are of three kinds: the worst, who say they have seen; the better, who say what they saw; the best, who so see and speak that they make others see for themselves. A poet of the last, best kind would say, for example, that there was no face around him but he could read it and show what it disclosed. In proof of this he gives three instances of his ability to see and speak so as to make you see what he sees with regard to these three kinds of poetic expression. The first instance is of a youth in prison, who, fearing the confinement will drive him mad, repeats over and over an event occurring during a walk he had once taken, and presents again the picture of the maiden he saw stooping, to avoid being hit by an overhanging hazel bough. The kind of expression employed here is the concentratedly dramatic, the best class of art, which makes others see. The second instance is of the bard Plara and the scene where he spent his youth. In this, the cramped streets huddle about a black belfry, looking the grimmer for the brightness of the suburb or the glory of the sunset which some one taller house than its fellows lets one see and smile at in a rigid unwonted way. The sun's red glare sinks from its top as if in a socket, a sign that the long drought would not be broken by rain, the minster too reminding you of that, with the dust lying in heaps around it. This was the town where Plara had sung Tempe's dewy vale in twenty-four sonnets. The kind of expression employed here is the second class of art, the descriptive or pictorial, which

shows what the poet saw. The third instance gives vent to a mood, abstractly, expressing a mental comment on Lucio's sadness as indicative of his being unsuccessful in love, while if triumphant he would be gay, etc. The kind of expression employed here is the first and worst kind of poetic expression,[1] the barely subjective, in which the poet says merely that he has seen, instead of showing what he saw, or making others see it for themselves. After giving these instances, Browning represents the listener as accepting the first as the actual truth, the second as an exact description, the third as about the gist of the variation from the other two such a poet's expression would be; thus vindicating his claim to attest his faculty as one of those poets who so see and speak that they make others see what they see. He concludes by asking them to advance confidently toward what he beholds and bids them take it on trust.

If the use of such sights be asked, he can only say that he does not blame the crowd for preferring a man of action like Salinguerra, who sees little but does his utmost, to the man of insight, the Sordellos who see the work of the world and make report upon it. At some future day the poets of insight may themselves use what they see. Meanwhile those who make others see may be kept on the alert lest men miss their apprehension of Heaven's gifts. To them Browning gives Sordello to be turned and tried. He knows well enough that, like Hercules in Egypt, he may then become a sacrifice. But his audience need not fear he will follow the demi-god's example and rend those about the alter, to two of whom he makes personal allusion, asking them to be glad that his sad mistress, in whose form he embodies humanity, comes to him to keep his pact in mind and urge him to his story. He concludes with a humorous story in which he implies that he hopes his audience

[1] Mrs. Orr, in her note upon this passage, seems to present Editors to have misapprehended it; and other commentators, Alexander and Nettleship, fail to follow the whole idea.

will not misconceive his portrait of Sordello as completely as in this anecdote Saint John mistook his own portrait.

Book IV. The strife of Guelf and Ghibellin over poor Ferrara is next put before the eye; then the procession of the envoys of the League coming to treat for Richard's ransom. Taurello's message to them, their reception of it, and the partisan color of their opinions upon Ecelin and the general situation are presented, dramatically, by means of bits of talk.

Leaving all this, Ferrara is next presented a little later, when it has had time to recover from the ills wrought it by the struggle over it. Before the eye rises Taurello's garden and palace there, which he built for his wife, Retrude, where Richard, Count St. Boniface, is now imprisoned, and at whose portal Sordello now pauses. He had left Verona for the Guelf camp, and had seen the advance of the League's ambassadors and the Papal delegation, but not as before, when his desire was to stand aloof from life except by keeping through his artistic skill a supreme place in it. Now a crowd like this made him desire to test it thoroughly, and the more he saw the less self-complacent he was. What was novel to him now in such a gathering as this? — since he, until lately, himself had regarded mankind as represented by its picked men, just as this collection represented by their chiefs the people of their cities. Upon such as these whom he had dreamed to rival in his youth must he spend his age instilling his will, making them enact the good things desired by him? Did these few notables represent all mankind as also notable? As well look to have all Taurello's garden trees one lofty pine, because real pines grew among them, when in reality many lesser trees and shrubs of all sorts filled up the unnoticeable corners and unobtrusively swelled the general effect. And yet the people, unconsidered and nameless, grew, — all those left at home, and others to come in the future, mingling, if only by virtue of their

bodies, their little joys and huge sufferings with their chiefs to make them really great. Sordello, now, therefore, fully estimating the importance of each chief, did not stop there, but saw behind each envoy the endless number of his absent people, these chiefs being, with reference to their people, like the tawdry finery of a man whose wealth is decaying. Before he knew it, this new vista of the actual life behind the shows of life, of the woe behind the display, which would henceforth now really determine his estimate of its value, had entered into him and blent him with all mankind. This new adopted self, which he regarded now as needing his help, must be helped, however, he saw, in some different way than he supposed; for they were more enslaved than he, and to find a few here and there able to regard their condition as he regarded it would not suffice, when the bulk of them was quite degraded. No, first of all, a more even development must be secured for them by opening to them the privileges so long possessed by but a few. He felt his error of the past, when he was contriving his poems in Mantua, drop away from him. It behooved him now to think of all men's wants as his own, to be gratified before he exercised his own peculiar gifts. Henceforth he accounted himself theirs, and only wondered how in his old hunger to impress himself on others he had been such a fool as never to have dreamed that good wrought for them would have been a pleasure to himself. He sighed to think that he had worn himself out when he might have been helping them with his first vigor, while they meanwhile had been served only by such an ineffective idiot as the Papal Legate, described to the life in an outburst of a few lines.

Now that he saw his course, he would accept both offices and please himself by serving the people, with the experienced Taurello to show how. There must be one good way. He understood Palma's account of the situation better now. He concludes that between the

two powers, Guelf for the Pope, Ghibellin for the Emperor, the first ever defeating the enterprise of the second, the second ever delivering from the repression of the first, one must be the abler to do the utmost good. His question then was which knows best how to help the world.

At this moment the Tyrol envoy passed with a train of warriors, reminding Sordello of strange ways of serving men which might be of use too. He resolves to seek Taurello for light.

Before an hour had passed he returned from his interview overwhelmed with painful knowledge. Through Ferrara, which had seemed an empty town to him that morning, he passed now with seeing eyes. A woman offered him the choice of her two daughters for half of his gold chain; but an archer, who recognized his livery, warned him against an assassin in collusion with them. As he passes through the streets where the delegates of the League are saying Mass, a man sees him who asks for a song of Sordello's, and though he felt little like it, he not only sang, but at the close, to a youth who rose as if to hear, said, "I made that," and, behold! the youth was Palma.

After having heard the Pope's and the Emperor's spokesmen, and Sordello himself, Taurello sat alone in a dreary presence-chamber bearing the insignia of the Emperor and the Romano family, whither Tito, the Emperor's delegate, had brought another imperial token, — the badge to be worn by Ecelin's successor. Was the warrior thinking now that his success and that badge would alter Ecelin's purpose, put new ambition in his son? No, only that this minstrel was Romano's last servant, as he had been the first. The lean, worn, stammering Sordello and the experienced, agile old man full of life and ease of manner are contrasted. Then the portrait, personal and spiritual, of the man of action is painted, the story of his career being told through his own reverie over the present crisis, leading up to his

decision not to take the badge himself as the Emperor's Prefect (**418-885**).

Meanwhile Sordello and Palma are together and alone once more, by one of the watch-fires of the camp, at midnight. He is asking her to explain to him the principle underlying the Ghibellin cause, which she wishes to make his; to assure him that there is some good at work beneath the bad for his people, and so rid his mind of the doubts bred in the colloquy with Taurello, and enable him at last to engage the force of his nature for some public good. Yet, although Taurello seems to him so able, doing all he, Sordello, should have done, and perhaps does help the people, he is shocked with the heartless tone he assumed with Tito, and the excuse he proffered for burning five hostages, the excuse itself being a blind, he suspects, for the benefit of himself and Palma, who approached just then. Palma answers. Sordello takes exception still to a course which profits the Romano party, but is not directed toward helping the people also. But do the Guelfs do any better? No, he concludes, as morning dawns, and seeing that two parties divide the world, without room for a third, carrying on the same principle of injustice, he can only trust that he may discover some cause distinct from either, such as influenced him to come there, hoping to move Taurello.

At this point a sentinel comes up to give them a subject for a ballad, the story of Crescentius Nomentanus. Do they know it? When Sordello answers that he does not, he tells them how whenever the Superior of the monastery (to which he had belonged before Pope Innocent ordered them to leave their wives or the order) introduced a novice, some one of the brothers always spoke before night of Crescentius in order to keep the memory of one whose fame and memorials were blotted out by edict. In the absence of Pope John and King Otho, he had re-established the consulship and built up the ancient Roman Republic of Brutus, till the Pope

and John and Hugo Este returned and crucified the *new Roman consul.*

At once it struck Sordello that both Guelf and Ghibellin were bent ever upon making Rome Guelf or Ghibellin. Here then was the inner cause to work for, a new Rome, type of all rights for all mankind. Upon him it should devolve to build it up, he dreamed, as he shaped his song of it at dawn.

Book V. At dusk Sordello's dream was chilled; arch by arch seemed to fall in the vision he reared of the Shining City. But before all hope had died and every arch dissolved, let it be noticed, he thinks, how slowly structures are ever raised. Cave, hut, and portico, aqueducts of masonry, and baths of carved alabaster reveal in a long series of successive steps the slow way in which Romes ever must be built. As a dream of a completion, Sordello sees its use, but acknowledges that he cannot charm it into being. An inner voice, as from an oracle, calls him, reminding him of the second vision granted man; the first is of men's whole work, the second is only of a man's first step to that completeness. The last step is beyond him, but the first is his. In verse, too, the collective man surpasses what the individual can do. The song started by a Nina is carried on by an Alcamo. He himself is not the first to cherish the idea of the life of the multitude as a thing to be evolved. Amid the "loose eternal unrest," an unknown one figured forth some central apparition making a rallying point for the purposeless flow of life, gathering defenders for it, and a patron of it, — Charlemagne, a type of unfeeling strength merely. Ages later, who was it took the idea on another step, discovering in the Church an independent centre of protection, but Hildebrand, a type of feeling by stress of strength producing knowledge? Many actors of the policy instituted by these two originators intervene, those wearing the three crowns of the Mediæval Cæsar, and those bearing the Papal key, before still another grade of advance is

passed, and the Crusade, the device of "breeding strength by other aid than strength," is created; and then the League, a means of fighting strength with strength, and the Truce, a means to supersede the use of strength, are the results of successive individual influence. Who will be found to take the growths already rooted into further wealth of branching life, producing knowledge merely by stress of knowledge? No, not Sordello, for were he to do it, it would be a step leaping over other work that ought to precede it. The work of Hildebrand representing the Church, of Charlemagne standing for the Emperor, have both to serve some use yet, and the next step be no more than to gain knowledge, part by strength, part by knowledge.

When that stage is reached, then, indeed, Sordello's desired step may be opportunely taken. But only time can show. One step made before the hour is ripe effects nothing; and when the conditions are right for progress, no help passed by is useful, but only an obstacle to be set aside. If the few years remaining to him seem not worth devoting to the struggle, it matters not; but now that this new point of view is attained, the old one is thenceforth superseded, and he can no longer be half himself. His warrior nature may surrender to his troubadour side, or that may develop new powers of verse, and abandon the knight side of him, but never again evade in consciousness the knowledge that he is bound up with the fate of all mankind. A succession of instances of human suffering causally wrought by the present conflicts follows: Among the happy-go-lucky wretches of the army, an idiot with all his members lopped off, wriggling round on his head among the archers for a bit of chestnut-bread; the fellow who worked one of the siege-engines double time in the hot sun in a raw sheep's hide, and is now one gangrene; or the dapper, handsome Lucchino, cut in two on his first campaign in getting flowers round the wall where Richard was imprisoned for a girl he never saw before;

or Tiso's widow-bride, pretty Berta, bearing him a child on a *dunghill* in the midst of the soldiery. All this historic glance over the slow progress of the multitude towards an unrepressed and happy life, closing with an inward glance at his own attitude in regard to it and to the present woes of the rabble (**80-291**), is borne in upon Sordello's consciousness as if from some low voice instilling the wisdom and insight of a guardian monitor, — his own peculiar *diamon*. It concludes now more insistently (**290-303**), a wind making melancholy music in the pines, meanwhile, insinuating that it may be Sordello — plucking flowers in Goito, as of old, or aloe-shafts, as at present in Ferrara — to whom, in this age, all the accumulation of past opportunities is borne, that he may seize and wield them now for the next advance, while he is, instead, idly dreaming of the last stage in the process. Since talking is his trade, let him persuade Salinguerra. Well, then, fail! ends the voice, impatiently; but Sordello bounds up crying, No; resolving to help the Guelfs, and shaking the dry aloe leaves, with which his fingers had been busy, from his clothes, he proceeds forthwith to Taurello, who is just speaking of him to Palma. In the rosy sunset light shining in the dark chamber on the chieftain and the lady of the house of Romano, Sordello pours out his argument to convince Taurello that the Guelf cause should be his. It was ineffective, mainly through his habit of mind, which disposed him to separate himself from the feelings he put into artistic shape as something outside himself, and from his habitual double consciousness, spending a part of itself in being aware of the situation — the figure he cut and the effect he produced in thus changing from his old rôle to that of Guelf advocate. The pitiful result of so prompt and brave an attempt was taken good-humoredly by the practised Taurello, but he rather formed some opinion of the speaker than was moved by what he spoke. Dashed by this, Sordello returned more desperately and more sincerely to the charge. Salin-

guerra, straightening back in his seat, while the bell boomed, and he fingered still the Emperor's insignia of office upon which his decision was due, finally re-echoed Sordello's conclusion gravely. Then suddenly turning to Palma, with the teasing query whether this opinion of her friend's would meet her desires, he recounted ironically the steps such a decision on his part would involve; submitting his ability to the Pope's service, freeing the Guelf chief, now so firmly captured, abandoning Ferrara, and giving to Azzo the Emperor's honors. He ended by asking who would arraign minstrels for lack of sense after this; although he himself acknowledged that he saw no reason why couplets and common sense need be incompatible, and would have preferred such a speech as this at Mantua to seeing the bull-bait there.

This rouses Sordello. Was a Troubadour absurd in thinking one of his office equal to interfering in the business of men of action to help the world? If Naddo needed response in such a dilemma, he recurred to a book of formularies, and picked out a suitable one. Sordello, having a healthy mind, now took what happened as so much nourishment to be assimilated by his own internal action, knowledge being the result of such acted-upon perception. Only if lies are true, may it be believed that Haroun al Raschid's magic manikin can do deeds of strength on undigested meals. So now, upon this occasion, Sordello's ability, thoroughly aroused, exerted itself notably for the benefit of his audience of two and a visionary host of judges, — the people gathering in a ring around the champion. Himself unable to build up another Rome, at least he was not impotent to command his liegeman to the task, nor so incompetent to know what the builder should do that he could be charged with forsaking his proper function. That he, decreed to be the helper of the world, must confess another fitter than himself to help it, was bad enough, but to have the post scorned which he must resign, was

his despair. While he spoke, the presence-chamber *seemed to grow more spacious, and the airy crowd around him to give him courage, "good wishes no mere* breath, kind prayers no vapor," for stronger and more agile he grew, like a mortal whom gods anoint. He proclaims finally the kingship of the poet, in which he shares. Though he fail, it will not. He would only be one who could not wield its real sceptre, but trifled with temporary faculties instead, which were merely heralds of a better capacity. What he had done was to experiment upon forms already extant, by which he could only imitate, not re-mold, nature. To be free to exhibit all life would signify only that means were created to a larger end, the end being "essence," or the inner self. Let that have way, and another result would be attained. You in your own person, embodying the life of the multitude, would now make the multitudinous life yours, which power you should transmit to a succeeding age to be transcended by some new mode of displaying human will. He is one of this class of poets, no longer content to feed his own individuality, but laboring to contribute his part in the development of social mankind. Is he too much elated by it? No; for he is one among many equals, brothers whom some special labor has satisfied. However far the past is penetrated, these doers of successive deeds contributing their perfection to the world, are descried. From "air, flame, earth, wave at conflict," some demiurge issues to effect order as from Chaos, Saturn; and so on, deeds climbing up successively to the birth of song, the work of mind. And song itself first producing deeds, next passes on to less corporeal effects. In one age the poet's task will be to show men in life through exaggerating or belittling their qualities, making this one out a saint and that a sinner; putting a Friedrich in Hell, an Agilulph in Purgatory, a Matilda in Heaven. In another age what can be done but show how men and women act and feel in presence of circumstances provided them? Again,

still, he would unveil, if not for the world, yet for a few, a life still nearer to the inmost reality. Or, as Browning interposes humorously here, "he writes 'Sordello.'" For what he would do now would be to show mankind its share in all these gradations of deed or song, — the underlying continuity and progress of its life, as so interpreted. Yet the poet has but supplied what mankind suggested, and it can again reconstruct what he outlines. The poet and man may be like brothers talking together by hints and clews perfectly understood, when brotherhood exists; the formal expatiation being requisite only when they are not brothers commanding jointly the results of all ages and all climes. So at Venice they knew the whole world by tokens of its life in every guise, till all could be focussed at last in one consummate symbol. Such perfect consummations must be gained, however, by imperfect approximations, the supreme fancy helped by the single service; so he, now putting aside his dreams, must bind Taurello to the Guelf cause, and stop the Emperor's advance, in the name of the People.

Browning interposes again here a pitying exclamation for his Sordello, so valiant and so ineffective.

As Palma turns toward Taurello, he speaks, first, of her love for Sordello, then of her father, who has apparently written to reply to some proposition of theirs, that he has given the Pope the best of his land to permit him to divide the worst between his two sons. With the land goes Taurello's labor of thirty years, which he has spent by deed as uselessly as Sordello by word, to obtrude an influence upon the world which no one cares for. If it were worth his while, he would take the place himself which these Romanos abandon; but an inconspicuous place best suits him, and such attitudinizing requires youth. If Palma could be head of her house now! Or if some one could bear the burden of that baldric for her! After all, Sordello is worth tutoring; he has a ready tongue and, though too worn, is young,

which is the main thing. He suddenly throws the Imperial badge upon Sordello's neck.

The sense of a crisis falls upon them. Palma, obeying the bidding of the moment, broke the silence to tell them Adelaide's dying confession. On the same night her son was born, amid the terror of the attack on Vicenza, Taurello's son, Sordello, was born, also, and hidden by Adelaide, after his mother's death, in her retreat at Goito, because the shrewd Tuscan woman had seen that night Taurello's superiority over his chief, and feared for the supremacy of her own child, if Taurello knew he had a child to work for. Palma had determined, on hearing Adelaide's confession, to repossess Sordello of his heritage, and do him justice in time. Now all she hoped to influence was suddenly realized. Taurello, after a pause, began to pour out upon his son explanations of the Imperial plans before he let his emotion have way at Palma's prompting, and laid his son's hand upon his eyes and lips and brow.

Sordello, flushed and overstrained, could scarcely bear the increasing excitement of the old warrior, whose plots formed faster and faster. Palma took him off with her, at last, leaving Sordello to himself, while in a room below him the excited soldier paced up and down, perfecting future projects for dominion over Italy. Suddenly a foot's stamp is heard above them. It is Sordello's summons, Palma supposes, and together they leave to join him.

Book VI. One thought of a poet of the Eglamor class (Browning begins), which, although less of an abstraction than usual with such poets, is not quite true to life, is that man is nothing beside nature. Yet something in Sordello's mood now, as night falls, seems to verify it for him. He seems unequal to beginning his decision until the din of the city, breaking in upon the sunset calm, arouses him to precipitate the fate that pauses over him. What help from him to pierce the future as the past lay pierced in the complaining city?

At last he was able to perceive the whole truth, that each attempt of life was not in itself wrong, but in so far as it thwarted some other attempt. The right way of progress was made up of all the ways, as all moods of his made up but one mind, demanding only some outer influence to control and uplift, as the moon the sea-tides, — some out-soul, as Palma expressed it. Without some concentration of this sort, his own susceptible inward power had spent itself in various dispersing channels of activity. Others, not half so strong, effected more, because having some outside moon to impel their force from stage to stage, — either human beauty or intellect, or some ideal aspiration. If neither a Palma's love nor a Salinguerra's conpetitive social force would be enough to sway all Sordello's capability, doubtless some larger force would mate his furthest range. Good being evident about him, what fear but the Best exists to lure one on? Ah! but it ever eludes. Do we want gems? The material for them is everywhere at hand, but dispersed. Do we want vital power? It is in the storm, the hilltops, and the woods. Men have it, but might have more, and be far beyond what they are. What if, instead of man's needing external power to evolve him, he hold within himself his own law of evolution? What if everything else, more solid and external than this, be but feints, embodiments — to deceive and lure man on — of the unbodied desire in him, which is, after all, really the force leading him forward? If he were strong enough, he would not need the appearance of an external guidance, but would find the internal desire enough, and then, in that case, would follow no partial good, but the real truth. The people, then, whom he had conceived of as outside himself, were identical with himself. Nor would he be led by an appearance of sickliness to consider that some few out of the healthy whole called for pity and help more than others, and that he, against himself, ought to assist these. As if he should be proud that he sacrificed himself to help the Guelfs, when all

were really himself, and a service to any was a service to all, and not a sacrifice of any! Still all this would be manifest in time. The buckler borne in a fight against the Moors is lined with the beard of the giant, who becomes in time your champion, if against him now you fight valiantly. Or if you can get through the desert without the fight, no need for the struggle with a foe potentially a friend. Half a month hence you may only need to use the arms that lamed Agathon and strung up Cydippe to hew down a brake of prickly pear, and leave more picturesque adventures for another age.

Time now for the present claims and sufferings of the people to be urged by him and brought to bear upon his decision. As in this colloquy with himself, he had just spoken for the "People's Then," — that is, the ultimate future condition, — he must now take the other side and advocate with himself the People's "Now," — their imminent needs. But he remembers and understands now why certain ineffective poets of Mantua carried the perfume of a larger mind, sweeter than that of the talent better suited to the present. They were apparently self-contradictory, like an insane rose burning its heart out before summer came, or a priestess of Bacchus grown bestial in dreaming how to become divine. So truth, perhaps, is always in the world in all its fullness of capacity to hurl "the world's course right," but is elicited spark by spark and at long intervals.

The mere spark that came now to Sordello was to abjure the badge, and so, perhaps, abash Taurello into abandoning the Emperor, at least show his own sincerity. But would it be a service to the world, after all? If, in the end, it would be, how meantime? How make the Guelfs, who cherish their partisan hatreds, see his "Then," his vision, that is, of the co-operating social whole? Why act as if one man was villain and another saint? If that were true, the course to take would be clear enough. Or if the mark of certain party likes and dislikes determined action for or against a Tito (the

Emperor's ambassador) or a Legate (of the Pope's); if so one acted, for every step forward a step backward would be taken. Yet through a way all good one cannot move. The evil he would do away with is exactly that which knits him with the people and moves him to action, and to the joy gained from successive action. This philosophy having been tried on his own experience, he tries it on that of mankind at large, and concludes that the gain of life for each individual is to conquer hindrances, and that to keep back any individual soul from a more precocious advance than others are equal to, will not assist the whole so well as to let that one attain his happiness as earnest of the joy in store for all in time. Why should he not, without prejudice to their future, enjoy the life this badge of the Emperor's could open up to him?

His plea with himself for his enjoyment of his own time of action, either for the world's progress, or against it, or else with it, grew more eager; his own choice and opportunities becoming more and more important to him, till he was ready to consider all evil, death, and the Future as nothing compared with his own craving for delight. He would serve the crowd self-sacrificingly, if it could be certainly effectual service; but if not so certain, why should he renounce his own life? If others could not do better than set theirs aside, he was able to use his earthly life, and ask not that Heaven should forestall Earth, but that he himself should be happy; not that the present should yield to some imagined better future, but that what *is* should be really used; not this or that declared to be right, and nothing else so, but each way of life, a Kaiser's or Serf's or a Brutus's, be proper to itself.

Then, as partially before in his life, he suddenly pierced through all relative notions of Sorrow and Joy, Virtue and Vice, etc. His fleshly bonds loosening, his soul side was set free, and he conceived of all such qualities as temporal, having no force to bind Mind or

Eternity (as Matter and Time now bind them), if they should choose to assert within a life their right to be free of them. Thus, asserting themselves, they would still work under conditions, — be "girt with circumstance;" but in quite a new way in their new phase of manifestation, — "next change" "cinct quite otherwise"; namely, with distinct good and ill, joys and sorrows, tending now not to opposite, but similar results, and so contrived, under this new combination of circumstances, as to make hard any attempt to work beyond, and easy any attempt to work within this new sphere, according as a prescribed course would agree or disagree with its conditions. So soon as he realized this possibility of a change of conditions which yet, while it absolved the mind from pursuing a special course as good or bad, made it work under conditions, though of its own devising, which would be suited to its new plane of experience, — so soon as he realized this, he felt alone, beyond the World and Time, all being made known to him. Why had he been so eager just before to use the power he had rather than to gain new power? Because, Browning explains, joy comes from the exercise of soul within limits upon matter, and when he conceived of life as bounded by time, his soul sought that exercise hungrily; but if soul attempt to refine matter beyond its capability, sorrow results. Only by adapting the infinity in the soul to the finite, which it wreaks itself upon for its delight, forever limiting itself to the prescribed circumstances, and changing its operation in degree but not in kind, can sorrow be avoided and joy retained. Sordello had sought to transcend the conditions of life. One of life's conditions being the relation of the body to the soul, the soul being boundless, the body limited, the soul must develop itself endlessly, not by sinking the body under the impossible burden of its eternal cravings, but by supplementing the body's feebleness with its power of infinitely adapting itself to temporary conditions. To satisfy a whole series of

spheres of life, eternity, in a word, the soul must prove too much for any one of those spheres.

But if time is insufficient for the soul, is the body equally insufficient? Is there no such possibility of harmony and joy as that communion of sky and water where each responsively mirrors the other? Would soul be discontent with body, or body rebel against the soul's exactions, if in this way they were blent? How could life be so ordered? Must the soul be brutalized, chained to the earthly task, dull to its far origin and its immortal future? May she never see All, the Before and After with the Now, and yet pursue no less her way with the simple wisdom that suffices for the moment's want? Where find the soul imbued with love enough to find that course?

Nature in both her aspects, outer and inner, has evolved Sordello's soul, her trees and flowers, her human life. Does he decide to save that human life? The revelation of Power finding its sway through Love, the Divine power incarnate in the human mode of life — this Sordello needs for clew to the right choice for his soul's service of life.

Has he found that key of Love, ending his larger orbit where Eglamor began his? When Salinguerra and Palma mount the stairs, they find him dead, the badge beneath his foot, and triumph lingering in his eye as after a struggle closed when help is coming.

Salinguerra cared little now what came of his plans. He made peace, married Sofia, Ecelin's youngest daughter, and so completely hid all trace of the hoped-for triumph of his family through Sordello, that when an old chronicler of Ferrara wrote of Salinguerra's son as dying before his sire, the townsfolk troubled themselves with wondering which one of Sofia's five children it meant. Ecelin's sons come to the fore instead, repressing all attempts at liberty, and cruelly rending and oppressing where Sordello might have uplifted and appeased.

Eglamor kept his lesser place, pure and permanent, in the love of the people; Sordello grew in fame. Men never tired of attributing to him the widest range of deeds as Knight, Bard and Gallant, while what he did not do, because bent on making all chances feed himself, instead of making his powers serve them and so unfold himself, the world suffers the lack of yet. The best to be said for him, still, is that his poem beats the lark's song to a barefoot child of Asolo, who lilts all that is left to memory of "Elys," as he climbs Asolo at daybreak.

If the odor "Sordello" leaves in the mind that has pored over it is rather pungent than sweet, the author concludes, it may be, were it not over-bold to say so, because it was meant to linger in the sense and ensure an after-savor.

In the collected edition of 1863, Browning gave descriptive headings to the pages of "Sordello," which, read consecutively, constitute his own abstract of the poem, as follows: —

Book I. Shelley departing, Verona appears; Why they entreat the Lombard League; Ecelo's House and Azzo, Lord of Este; Count Richard's Palace at Verona; His Boyhood in the Domain of Ecelin; The Progress of a Poet's Soul; The Delights of his Childish Fancy; Newborn Judgment recks Sympathy; He creates his own Sympathizers; He means to be Perfect — say, Apollo; The Time is Ripe and he is Ready.

II. At a Court of Love a Minstrel sings; How had he been Superior to Eglamor? Loving his Art and Rewarded by it; Who Sordello really was; Can do Nothing, yet imagine All; The Touch that comes not by an Effort; Declines from the Ideal of Song; The whole Visible Sordello goes Wrong; He pleases neither Himself nor Them; His Degradation is Complete; He chances upon his Old Environment.

III. Life and Death in Nature; Man has Multifarious Sympathies; Renunciation insures Despair; Palma be-

comes his Associate; For his Sake she aspired; Salinguerra remedies Ecelin's Errors; Sordello's Circle Complete; The Poet watches his own Life; Youth instigates to Tasks like this; Let the Poet take his own Part; One ought not blame, but praise this.

IV. Men suffered while Parties strove; How Guelfs criticise Ghibellin Work; Sordello ponders all Seen and Heard; Men, not Machines, but Living Things; He would fain have helped Men; Salinguerra's Portrait, Body and Spirit; A Fresh Calamity checks Fortune; So he figures in the Second Rank; Salinguerra soliloquizes; Whom does the Prize await? What makes a Ghibellin? Who was the Roman Crescentius?

V. Mankind's Triumph the Work of Ages; Each Series of Workmen seems the Last; If Associates trouble you, stand off; He takes his first Step as a Guelf; Scorn flings Cold Water in his Face; He asserts the Poet's Rank and Right; The Poet's Dignity in Successive Forms; Salinguerra enlightens Sordello; Sordello declared Salinguerra's Son; How Sordello is stirred by the Secret; He may yet spring into Success; At the Close of a Day or a Life.

VI. Strong, he needed External Strength; Within, his Sympathy with the People; How much of Ill ought to be Removed? Free, he can infinitely enjoy Himself; There is a Life beyond Life; Even here, is Failure Inevitable? Knowledge too late; Salinguerra's Part lapses to Ecelin; Good Will — Ill Luck, get Second Prize.

1. 4. *Friendless-people's friend:* Don Quixote. The allusion insinuates also that the author means to befriend the friendless people in the poem to follow.

6. *Pentapolin named o' the Naked Arm:* King of the Garamanteans, who went into battle bare-armed. "Don Quixote," I. iii.

11. *Verona:* a famous city of northeastern Italy, by its situation important for the defence of upper Italy.

60. *Stay — thou, spirit:* Shelley.

65. *The thunder-phrase of the Athenian:* Æschylus, whose verse is rugged and sonorous, and who fought, as a young man, at Marathon against the Persians.

69. *Sidney . . . the starry paladin:* Sir Philip (1554–1586), poet and soldier, whose sonnets to Stella (star) were written under the name of Astrophel (lover of the star).

78. *The Second Friedrich* (1194–1250): grandson of Barbarossa and son of Henry VI., emperors of Germany of the Hohenstauffen family. Elected king of the Romans 1196, emperor in 1210, in opposition to Otho IV. of the Saxon line, and crowned by Honorius in Rome, 1220.

79. *The Third Honorius:* made Pope, 1216; died, 1227.

85. *A single eye . . . cared for the soft sky:* obviously Sordello, the poet not yet introduced.

102. *Richard of Saint Boniface:* a Lombard noble of Monferrat, son of Richard of San Bonifaccio, ruling over Verona under Azzo, and a warrior for the Guelf or Papal faction.

103. *Azzo, Este's Lord:* Azzo VII., Marquis of Este and Ancona, who succeeded to the marquisate and headship of the Guelf faction, 1215, a spirited but imprudent leader. See Browning's own account of his family, **292-298.** As to the alliance here mentioned with Richard, see fuller account, **166-187,** in the poem, and notes on same below, **165** and **172.**

104. *Taurello Salinguerra* (1160–1240): whose name may be Englished Bullock Sally-in-war, son of Taurello, of a noble family of Ferrara, where he was head of the Ghibellin party, and its chief lieutenant, in all Italy, under Ecelin. See for his story **IV. 470-849,** in the poem and note on the same.

105 *Ecelin Romano:* Ecelin II., called the monk, representative of the Emperor and head of the Ghibellin party, son of Ecelin the Stammerer, father by Adelaide the Tuscan of Ecelino III. and Alberic, between whom

he divided his lands in 1223 to become a monk, and dying in 1225.

110. *Lombard League:* the cities of Lombardy, which was made a part of his empire by Charlemagne, in 774, gradually adopting dependent forms of government, were, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, united in leagues against the German Emperors, which were encouraged by the Popes, and upheld the Papal side in the strife of the period between the Guelf and Ghibellin families of Lombardy. The first league was formed against Barbarossa, 1175–1183; the present league against Frederick II., 1225, headed by Milan, with Bologna, Piacenza, Verona, Brescia, Faenza, Mantua, Vercelli, Lodi, Bergamo, Turin, Alessandria, Vicenza, Padua, Treviso.

115. *Pavis:* from the Italian *pavese*, a shield used in the Middle Ages to protect assailants of a fortress. The purple shield of the Este faction proudly attacking Ferrara had fallen flat.

118. *Merely your pushing-by:* the "your" used in an indeterminate sense, as in "Your serpent of Egypt is bred of your mud," etc. The speaker is grumbling against Este's adventurousness, as if not backed by foresight and pertinacity.

121. *Duke o' the Rood:* Azzo, so called as head of the League and Knight of the Holy Cross or Rood of the Pope.

123. *The hill-cat:* Ecelin II.

126. *The lion:* Azzo, Lord of Este.

128. *Osprey:* Salinguerra. The osprey to which the chieftain is likened is a bird of the falcon family, commonly called a fish-hawk or sea-eagle. It lights upon its prey with swift and sure aim.

131. *The Kaiser:* Friedrich II., likened to a tempest, in whose loosing the sea-eagle delights.

138. *The Pontiff:* Pope Honorius.

139. *Oliero:* the monastery in the Alps near Bassano which Ecelin is about to enter as a monk.

145. *Cino Bocchimpane:* a typical citizen belonging to one party in the feud, *Buccio Virtu* (**146**) belonging to the opposite party.

146. *God's wafer:* an Italian oath, "Ostia di Dio," or Host of God, the Host being the name for the wafer of bread used in the Mass or Lord's Supper.

147. *Tutti Santi:* all saints, another common Italian oath.

150. *To Padua, Podestà:* Ecelin having seized the city, Salinguerra administered it for a time as its Podestà, or governor.

155. *Guelfs laugh . . . a week . . . The next, their laughter sunk,* etc.: Muratori, in his "Annals of Italy," relates these incidents as follows, as translated by W. M. Rossetti: "Azzo VII. . . . resided frequently in Ferrara, as being head of the Guelf faction and possessing here great plenty of property and vassals, — one of whom was Salinguerra himself, head of the Ghibellins. It was ill brooked by his adherents that Salinguerra and his partisans should enjoy the best offices of the republic. Consequently, in the month of August (1221), taking up arms, they assailed the party of Salinguerra, and after a severe fight they forced him to abandon the city." Mr. Rossetti remarks that "Muratori does not say anything of the . . . prudential departure of Salinguerra." But Muratori adds that this Guelf success led to a treaty which resulted in an agreement reinstating the Guelfs. This result of an arbitration Browning gives in his vivid dramatic way, as accepted by Salinguerra, — "My presence *judged* the single bar," etc. (**151**). Muratori confirms this when he says: "Sage mediators had to interpose, so that a few days afterwards the expelled men returned to their homes." The return of Salinguerra Muratori sets down as taking place the next year, 1222, Browning's "next week" apparently being an intensive expression: "In this year the faction of Salinguerra, head of the Ghibellins, prevailed in the city of Ferrara; so that

Azzo . . . with his Guelfic party was obliged to quit the city."

165. *Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce, on the gorged bird:* the retaliation of the Guelf lion-creatures, Azzo and Richard, likened to a lynx and ounce, on the triumphant osprey, Salinguerra, is thus given by Muratori as taking place in 1222: "To recover from this affront, the Marquis got together an army collected at Rovigo and from his other states, and from Lombardy and the march of Verona, and went to pitch his camp under Ferrara." A second armament against Ferrara is placed by Muratori in 1224: "Collecting a good army from his own states and from his friends in Mantua, Padua, and Verona, bent upon vengeance [for an incident of the first armament not now mentioned by Browning, but referred to later, IV. 613], returned to the siege of Ferrara." This renewed attack Browning seems to refer to in line **168**, "troop after troop encamp," etc.

171. *Within their walls men fed on men:* Mr. Rossetti says: "I hardly think this last grim clause can be accurate. Muratori, at any rate, does not indicate that the siege had been of such length or rigor as to reduce the Ferrarese to famine." It will be noticed, however, that, according to Muratori, the siege began in 1222, and was not repelled until 1224, so that, despite an intermediate success by stratagem, — the incident to be referred to later, **IV. 613** and note, — the city had been in a state of siege for two years. If Browning imagines a famine, it seems to be an imagination strongly based on likelihood.

172. *Taurello calls a parley*, etc.: Muratori relates the circumstances of Richard's capture thus: "The astute Salinguerra exerted himself so much by affectionate letters and embassies that he induced Count Richard of San Bonifazio, with a certain number of horsemen, to enter Ferrara under the pretext of concluding a friendly pact. But, on entering, he was at once made prisoner

with all his company; and therefore the Marquis of Este, disappointed, retired from the siege."

193. *When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask:* that is, the story of this event was written down in his best style by some monk, a few years after it happened, when the new Emperor of the Hohenstauffen family, Frederick II., who had been promising since 1218, before his coronation by Honorius, that he would head an effective crusade and had repeatedly excused himself, at the last date fixed for going, August, 1229, set sail only to return three days afterward.

194. *Flung John of Brienne's favor from his casque:* that is, gave up the succor of Jerusalem, of which John of Brienne was the Christian king, and whose daughter, Iolante, the young emperor had married in 1225, with protestations of friendship and alliance against the Saracens. He was accused by John of breaking faith with him, neglecting Iolante for Bianca, by whom he had two sons, and for her cousin Lucia, daughter of Walter of Brienne, whom he was said to have seized by force.

196. *Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve losses to Otho and to Barbaross,* etc.: that is, had no mind to let the Estes have a chance, in his absence, to regain losses sustained under his predecessors, Otho III. and Frederick I.

197. *Or make the Alps less easy to recross:* the task of the Emperor's supporters being to keep Lombardy easy of access for Frederick to assert his rule there; that of the Este party to ally the Lombard towns, and fortify them against their over-lord.

198. *Confirming Pope Honorius' fear, was excommunicate that very year:* that is, the Emperor, on account of his delays, treaties with the Moslem, etc., throughout the term of Honorius, was suspected of insincerity; in this year, August, 1229, it was supposed to be proved, and Honorius's successor, Gregory IX., publicly excommunicated him Sept. 30, 1229.

201. "*The triple-bearded Teuton come to life*": Frederick I., called Barbarossa, or Red-beard, crowned 1152,

died 1190, who was fabled to be asleep, in a cavern, among the rocky crags of the Untersberg, seated at his council-table, with his knights around him, ready, when his beard, which had grown through the rock-table, had wound thrice around it, to come to life and reinaugurate the power of the Empire.

244. *Arpo or Yoland:* Browning's information, apparently drawn from obscure annals, transcends ours and our predecessors', and whether it is Arpo or Yoland remains a question. It is probably in fact doubtful to what plausible northern adventurer, without name or country, the house of Romano owed its origin. Only known is it that he crossed the Alps in Conrad II.'s train and settled conveniently near the Trentine Pass, the natural highway left in the Alps between Germany and Lombardy.

247. *The Trevisan:* the province of Treviso, of which the city of that name was capital.

248. *Conrad:* Conrad III., first of the Hohenstauffens, German Emperor in 1138, never crowned Holy Roman Emperor at Rome, in whose time the Guelf and Ghibellin conflicts are supposed to have arisen, the upholders of his rival for the crown, Henry Duke of Saxony, having a brother named Welf who led the Saxon forces and whose name was used as a battle-cry. To this the Suabians under Conrad's brother opposed their slogan of Waibling for the hamlet whence he came. Conrad III. died in 1152.

249. *Ecelo:* first of the name and founder of the house, father or grandfather of Ecelin the Stammerer, who was father of Ecelin II. the Monk, the Ecelin of this poem.

251. *Godego, Ramon, Marostica,* etc.: hamlets, as Browning explains, on the Asolan and Euganean hills and the Rhetian and Julian Alps, adjoining the Lake da Garda and the Tyrol.

253. *On the Suabian's fief:* held by the emperors of the Suabian line, Conrad, and his nephew Frederick I. as the over-lord.

257. *At Roncaglia:* Frederick I. held a diet here in 1154, summoning his Lombard barons over whom he claimed sovereignty to vow submission to the new Emperor. At this time he proved the convenience of having the towns just mentioned commanding the pass along the vale of Trent in the hands of the family his house had made powerful, and here, naturally, the chief place in his favor was held by Ecelo, whose father's claims to Lombard nobility recorded at Milan had been laughed at by the older Italian nobles.

274. *Otho:* the Emperor Otho III., especially ambitious for the secular power of the Empire in Italy.

297. *Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,* etc.: the range of cities north of the Po.

306. *Father Porphyry:* a typical abbot supposed here to have been friendly to the growing power of the Este family, and ready to support pretensions verified by ancient chronicles and to blot out traces showing any condescension towards it such as a prelate like Hildebrand would be likely to imply, for he pronounced it sinful for any priest to receive a benefice from a layman, the Church being the prime authority.

308. *Hildebrand:* the famous prelate, made Pope Gregory VII., 1073, whose policy was to centre secular as well as spiritual dominion in the Church.

311. *Within his palace:* that is, in Richard's palace, the Council of Twenty-four were discussing Richard's release from captivity in Ferrara.

314. *Cressets:* torch-lights or lights from vessels of oil borne on long poles, said to have been called cressets because made with a cross above the flame or beacon.

317. *Carroch:* the ox-drawn war-carriage or triumphal car bearing the standard and other insignia of a city as well as its alarum-bell, which in this case seems alone to be referred to.

344. *Armenian bridegroom,* etc.: an Armenian wedding custom.

346. *Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy:* the

gate-vein or portal vein is one in which the greater number of veins from the organs of the abdomen unite, conveying the blood from the body to the heart. The appropriateness of the metaphor as a name for Sordello is threefold, as a creator of the language of Italy, he being the first to open the way to literary expression in the vernacular; as a forerunner of Dante poetically; and as a patriot, contemplating such action for Italy in opening the way for the Emperor's ascendency, as Dante desired

348. *Thy forerunner, Florentine:* Dante, who refers significantly to Sordello in "Purgatory," vi. 75, vii. 2, 52, viii. 38, 43, 62, 98, ix. 53, and also in "De Vulgari Eloquentia," see ii. 574 and note, also Introduction, pp. xxii–xxiii.

365. *John's transcendent vision:* the vision of St. John recorded in the Book of the Revelation.

366-372. *Dante, pacer of the shore . . . in gracious twilights:* these lines picture the progress of Dante through Inferno to the entrance of Purgatory, whence from an eminence, to which the shade of Sordello conducts Dante and Virgil, they pass to a flowery valley where many noble spirits wait. See "Purgatory," vi.

374. *In Mantua territory half is slough:* the river Mincio, one of the tributaries of the Po flowing from the Lago di Garda, the largest in breadth of the Italian lakes, made a great swamp encircling the city of Mantua, separating this island of firmer land from the mountains where Goito castle stood. See Dante's "Inferno," xx. 76.

397. *The Arab's wisdom:* sayings in Arabic, the incised letters decorating the room.

412. *Caryatides:* carved figures of women supporting a part of a structure, so called from Caryatis, a name for Diana, from Carya, a town in Arcadia where she was especially honored.

422. *Buried vestal:* the vestals were priestesses con-

secrated to the service of Vesta, and assigned unusual powers and privileges among the Roman women, but if found unfaithful to their vow of chastity, shut in a vault in the ground with a lighted lamp, and a little bread and wine and water, and left to die of hunger.

457. *Ecelo,* see **249.**

458. *Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed, Auria, and their Child, with all his wives,* etc.: Ecelin II. is said to have had four wives, Agnes Este, Palma's mother; Speronella Dalesmannini, who fled from him with Olderico di Fontana; Cecilia di Abano; and Adelaide di Mangone, the Tuscan, mother of Ecelin III. and Alberic and four daughters. The "girl he wooed" is probably Maria di Camposanpietro, whom he carried off and kept till she bore him a daughter, who may be the Auria here mentioned.

516. *A legend:* a myth of the poet's making perhaps, or possibly, based on the account of the Creation in Genesis, which makes light the first creative act, and later the production of sun, moon, and stars. It illustrates the prevalence of a general consciousness, externalized, before the recognition of consciousness localized as within the self.

559. *Emprise:* adventurous enterprise, derived from the Old French *emprise;* a rare usage, employed later, also, by Browning.

574. *Calming the chisel:* that is, bringing the serene standards of Greek art and ideal beauty to bear upon the art-impulse of the Pisan pair named.

575. *Nicolo:* Pisano, or, of Pisa (1207–1278), sculptor and architect, one of the first to break away from the Byzantine stiffness; said to have been much impressed by antique sarcophagus, still at Pisa, which was an inspiration from the classic style for him.

576. *Guidone:* Guida da Sienna, whose picture of 1221, now in Siena, reveals him as a pioneer of the art to come in the Renaissance period.

578. *Saint Eufemia's sacristy,* etc.: a picture of the

Virgin in the church of that name in Verona, built in the thirteenth century.

590. *Pyx:* box, or coffer, usually sacred to the service of the worship of Christ in the Roman church, of Apollo, or other Greek or Oriental gods, in earlier days.

592. *So they found at Babylon:* "It is said that after the city [of Seleucia] was burnt, the soldiers searching the temple [of Apollo] found a narrow hole, and when this was opened in the hope of finding something of value in it, there issued from some deep gulf, which the secret magic of the Chaldeans had closed up, a pestilence laden with the strength of incurable disease, which polluted the whole world with contagion, in the time of Verus and Marcus Antoninus, from the borders of Persia to Gaul and the Rhine" (Ammianus Marcellinus, as cited by Professor Sonnenschein).

593. *Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage Antonine:* during the joint reign of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (the philosopher) and the scapegrace Lucius Verus; the latter was in command of the Roman forces in the East, and engaged in a war with Parthia. His generals sacked Seleucia, and he was himself present in the neighborhood of Babylon during the winters of A. D. 163–5 (Clinton, Fasti Romani, as cited by Professor Sonnenschein).

594. *Apollo's shrine:* Seleuceus, one of Alexander's generals, built the town of Seleucia, and no doubt founded the temple of Apollo.

603. *Loxian:* a name for Apollo.

622. *Foreign women-servants:* because they were foreign they would be less able to acquaint him with news either of the outside world or of his origin.

632. *Palmer-worm:* a hairy worm or caterpillar. See Joel i. 4.

657. *Orpine:* the Sedum Telephium, commonly called Stone-crop, a yellow plant.

665. *Adventurous spider:* Dr. H. C. McCook, an araneologist, in *Poet-lore*, I. 486, says that this is a

species of orb-weaver, *Orbitelariæ*, variously called the garden, geometric, diadem, and cross spider. It makes a long thread which, floating in the air in various directions, happens, from its glutinous quality, at last to adhere to some object near it — a lofty plant, or the branch of a tree. When the spider has one end of the line fixed, he walks along part of it, and fastens another, then drops and affixes the thread to some object below; climbs again, and begins a third, fastening that in a similar way. Browning is wrong in making the spider shoot her threads from depth to height.

667. *Barbican:* a watch-tower. — *Battlement:* a parapet at the top of a building, with even gaps and teeth alternately placed, used originally in forts, now for ornament.

693. *Naddo:* here and all through the poem used to typify the conventional critic of poets and poetry. — *Eat fern-seed:* supposed to make the eater invisible.

707. *Fleering:* from the Icelandic *flyra*, to grin; the poppy in full bloom is spoken of as flaunting its colors as if laughing.

708. *Crane:* cranium, skull, the seed-vessel of the poppy left bare with the falling of the petals.

751. *Adelaide (bent double o 'er a scroll:* Adelaide was accused of practising magic and being wise in astrology. She was probably a wiser and more learned woman than common.

768. *Lord, liegeman, valvassor and suzerain:* different feudal grades: the lord, ruler or proprietor; the liege, his vassal or liegeman; valvassor, a principal vassal holding not directly from the sovereign but of an intermediate lord; suzerain, a lord paramount.

812. *Ecelin . . . becomes this month . . . imperial Vicar:* by Otho IV. in 1209.

815. *The Trentine-pass:* the pass by the vale of Trent, which it was the ambition of the Ghibellins to keep open for the Emperor to cross the Alps by at any time, and of which Ecelin was especially in guard.

819. *The Guelf's paid stabber:* refers to the office held by the Marquis of Este as head of his faction.

820. *The sleight o' the sword baffling the treason:* refers to a story told of Ecelin II., that, walking in St. Mark's Square in Venice with Azzo, the Marquis of Este, assassins encircled him to stab him, and Azzo in collusion with them siezed him to pinion his arms and prevent his escape, but making a violent effort he freed himself.

841. *Malek:* a name for any Moor, such as the Crusaders had to contend with, and whom Sordello fancies himself defeating.

868. *The Miramoline:* a Saracen prince. "Miramoline" was a corruption of his title, Emiral Maromenium, Prince of the Faithful. Frederick II. was accused of heretical friendships with the Saracens.

871. *Dates plucked from the bough,* etc.: John of Brienne sent his son-in-law, the Emperor Frederic II., a bunch of dates as a reminder of the often-promised crusade to deliver Jerusalem.

907. *Crenelled:* grooved.

909. *Damsel-fly:* the dragon-fly.

928. *The Pythons:* that is, the adventurous exploits of Apollo fade before his other deeds of love and art, the Pythons standing for the attack of Apollo upon the Serpent called the Python, generated from the mud and stagnant water after the flood of Deucalion. The god killed him, and instituted the Pythian games in honor of the victory.

932. *Delians:* priestesses of Apollo at the shrine of Delos in the island sacred to his worship. Sordello fancies the sculptured girls are Delians, his priestesses.

938. *Daphne:* a nymph whom Apollo loved and pursued; to escape him, the gods upon her entreaty changed her into a laurel-tree. Ovid's Metamorphoses, i. v.

984. *Northward to Provence that, and thus far south the other:* refers to bands of troubadours (song-makers), and trouvères (story-tellers) professing the "Gay Science," who passed from Sicily, where they were in great favor

at the young Emperor's Court at Messina, and on from Provence or Guienne in Southern France, where they were equally at home.

987. *Which in their very tongue:* all other literary expression finding vent in Latin, while the troubadours of Provence sang in Provençal, and in Sicily in the vernacular.

II. 65. *Jongleurs:* the jongleurs were jugglers, pantomimists and gleemen, generally singing not their own songs and stories but those made by the troubadours and trouvères.

66. *Court of Love:* a poetical tournament held at a court where the presiding lady acted as judge, awarding the laurel crown and other prizes, rich raiment usually, to the poet who sang best, all the contestants taking the same theme.

68. *Elys:* meaning lily, a name here ascribed to the subject of the poem, an ideal woman, and also, as is said, to the lute-string on which the accompaniment was played.

91. *A scarab 'neath the tongue:* a knot under the tongue in the shape of a beetle or scarabæus, one of the marks distinguishing Apis, the sacred bull of ancient Egypt. Naddo had twitched at Sordello's elbow to pull him down and stop him (see line **81**), thinking he was going to make a fool of himself; he is appalled to find in him such poetic power and success as accuses his twitches at him of imprudence.

118. *Squarcialupe and Tagliafer:* jongleurs like Naddo Squarcialupe, and Tagliafer, who were the connoisseurs of the time in poetry. Squarcialupe seems to have been a trouvère, also, framing stories of his own composition (see lines **783-785**).

151. *Take Elys, there,* etc.: Sordello's verses on Eglamor's theme are here given, celebrating a type of womanly beauty suiting the taste of the time, — fair hair, honey-color, and an oval or pear-shaped face. These verses recur throughout the poem.

177. *A Roman bride,* etc.: the wedding customs of Rome retained traces of the Sabine Rape, or capture of the Sabine women by force to be the wives of the founders of Rome, the parting of the bride's hair with a spear-point being one of the emblems of the husband's authority so derived.

211. *Like Perseus,* etc.: who rescued Andromeda from the rock where she was condemned to be chained awaiting the moment when the sea monster should devour her.

215. *A poor gnome:* a dwarf working in caves and mines with gemmed but earthy instruments, instead of a sprite of air and light.

290. *A plant . . . yielding a three-leaved bell:* the Anthericum liliastrum, or day-lily, St. Bruno's lily.

296. *My own month came:* Browning's birth-month, May.

300. *Massic jars dug up at Baiæ:* Baiæ, a luxurious pleasure-resort for the ancient Romans near Naples, where have been unearthed such relics as jars formerly holding Massic or Falernian wine from the vineyards of Mons Massicus, and still retaining the odor.

322. *At Vicenza both her counts banished the Vivaresi,* etc.: this embroilment of families at Vicenza in 1194, followed by the attack on Ecelin, in the midst of which Sordello and Ecelin III. were born (see **V. 751-798**), was the prologue to the Guelf and Ghibellin conflicts between the Este and Ecelin parties described at the opening of the poem. Ecelin II. having succeeded to the headship of the Vivario or Vivaresi faction, which later became the Ghibellin party, was exiled for a time from Vicenza by the opposing faction, the Counts of Vicenza.

331. *Elcorte:* according to Mrs. Caroline H. Dall, who collected from old chronicles, printed and in MS., which she found in the Canadian Parliament Library, since burned, various accounts of Sordello, this account of Sordello's parentage is suggested by some Provençal sketches of his life, which say that he was "born in the

Mantuan territory, of a poor knight named Elcorte." "He early began to write songs," according to these sketches, "and was attached to the Count of St. Boniface, and the lover of his wife, eloping with her."

474. *Truchman:* interpreter or mentor.

516. *Rondel:* a thirteen-verse poem, in which the beginning is repeated in the third and fourth verses — from *rotundus.* — *Tenzon:* a contest in verse before a tribunal of love — from *tendo,* to strive. — *Virlai:* or *vireley,* a short poem, always in short lines, and wholly in two rhymes, with a refrain — from *virer.* — *Sirvent:* a poem of praise or service, sometimes satirical — from *servire.*

518. *Angelot:* the mediæval lute.

537. *Anafest . . . Lucio:* characters in Sordello's verses.

541. *Bianca:* a real person to whom the youth supposes Sordello's love-song must be addressed.

574. *How he . . . slow rewrought that Language:* this refers to Sordello's attempt, as recorded by Dante in "De Vulgari Eloquio," to form the Tuscan tongue by fusing the dialects of Cremona, Brescia, and Verona.

612. *Sparkles off:* here used as an intransitive verb; a description of the casting off in a glittering heap of the bright linked mail to which the new language is likened.

615. *Apollo from the sudden corpse of Hyacinth:* Apollo had charge of the education of the much loved Hyacinth, and one day, in playing quoits with him, the quoit fell upon his head and killed him. See Ovid's "Metamorphoses," 10.

617. *Montfort o'er the Mountaineers:* Simon de Montfort, an austere but able man, who led the crusade of the Church against the heretical Albigenses of Languedoc at the close of the twelfth century. He was rewarded with the lands he ravaged, and loaded with honors as the hero of the "Holy War."

646. *Fairy dust:* a magical dust enhancing their value.

659. *The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man — who,*

etc.: the perplexity generally felt over this passage is cleared somewhat by referring this "who" to the "Poet," the subject of the entire sentence down to line 668, when, after the dash, it is the man-portion which is "not to be put off with self-reflectings," etc. The sentence following (line 670), it will be noticed, is a question, the "who" that sauntered forth in dreams being "just his sorry self," *i. e.*, neither half taken separately but the jarring Sordello, including both these discordant portions. See the preceding digest, pages 319 and 320, for running summary of the passage.

684. *Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone:* as suggested in the digest (which see), the quiver and bow are here likened to the power and reach of the poet, or the conception and emotional force of poetry; the lyre to the formal expression merely.

691. *John's cloud-girt angel:* Revelation x 1, 2, 8–10.

714. *Vidal:* Pierre (died 1210), a troubadour of Toulouse, whom Sordello is reputed to have disliked especially, and who is referred to by Dante in "Purgatory," xxvi. 113.

715. *Murrey-colored:* mulberry color, dark red. — *Filamot:* dead-leaf color, "*feuille-morte*," yellow brown.

731. *Rathe-ripe:* early ripe. Rathe, from Anglo-Saxon *hrathe*, quick, soon; hence also *rather*, in the sense of sooner.

740. *Twenty-cubit plectre:* a gigantic plectre or plectrum, an ivory wand for striking the strings of the antique lyre; a cubit or forearm's length, eighteen inches.

768. *Bocafoli:* a typical poet, dealing in bare abstractions, limpid to a fault.

769. *Plara:* a typical poet of over-elaborate descriptive verse; the specimen following gives his style. See also III. 881-900.

770. *Knops:* buds; Anglo-Saxon *cnœp*, allied to "knob." — *Almug:* sandalwood; see 2 Chronicles ix. 10, 11.

772. *River-horse:* hippopotamus.

775. *Pompion:* pumpkin.

825. *Pappacoda, Tagliafer:* nicknames for typical jongleurs who were like parasites upon the troubadours, tutoring and criticising by extreme censure or adulation.

828. *O'er-toise:* over-stretch, from *toise,* Old French for a very long measure. The word suggests such action as that of a measuring worm.

859. *Count Lori:* the name of the local historical gallant he chose at first for his theme.

860. *Rough peasant-Paul,* etc.: untutored persons who read the New Testament and interpreted it to their own minds, giving rise to the simple creed of the Paterini, or Paulicians, a sect Ecelin was accused of allying himself with. They originated in the East, whence those who were not killed were driven westward by the Empress Theodosia's zealous persecutions to settle in Italy and Southern France, where they were preached against and persecuted. They were thought to be the originators in Languedoc of the Albigenses, against whom Simon de Montfort led his crusade, and to be the germ of the Reformation in Germany.

873. *I am sick too, old,* etc.: Ecelin the monk divided his land between the Pope and his two sons, Ecelin III. and Alberic, agreeing to marry them with Beatrix Este and Giglia St. Boniface, and went into the convent at Oliero, in 1223. Negotiations were pending, but not consummated, for the marriage of Palma to Count Richard. Browning brings in, meanwhile, the imaginary events to be next related in connection with the historical siege of Ferrara and the capture of Richard.

907. *Congeed:* from the French *conger,* permitted to take leave; ironical politeness.

909. *Green and yellow:* the livery of Ecelin and also of the Emperor, a green mantle and gold circlet being the badges marking the hereditary patrician.

910. *Retrude:* daughter of Henry VI., and wife of Taurello.

929. *Strojavacca:* a rival troubadour, probably not historical.

932. *Cobswan:* head-swan; *cob,* from Anglo-Saxon *cop,* the top or head.

966. *Cat's head and ibis' tail:* symbols of Egptian sacred animals, set in mosaic in the pavement.

969. *The Soldan:* the Sultan, head of the Mohammedans, in which there was rivalry, one seat of government being at Damascus, a second at Cairo, where the Soldan of this allusion seems to be placed.

III. 2. *Moonfern:* hemionitis, having healing qualities. — *Trifoly:* trifolium, clover; magical qualities were assigned to it, which have come down to the present time in superstitions about the four-leaved clover.

12. *Woven of painted byssus:* of the silky filaments by which shell-fish fasten themselves to the rocks.

13. *Tyrrhene whelk:* the shell-fish from which the celebrated Tyrian purple was prepared which was one of Tyre's staple articles of commerce.

14. *Trireme:* a ship or galley with three tiers of oars, such as was used in antique commerce.

15. *Satrap:* the Persian title for the governor of a province.

71. *Tacit:* silent.

88. *Mincio . . . laughed, a broad water:* the Mincio now expands in a broad lake-reach encircling Mantua.

90. *Spilth:* anything spilled or poured out.

119. *Island-house:* the Emperor's country villa near Palermo, in Sicily, called La Favara.

123. *Nuocera:* between Pompeii and Amalfi, where Frederick settled a colony of Saracens from Sicily in 1220. The Emperor was taunted by Charles of Anjou as the Sultan of Nuocera.

129. *Mollitious:* soft, in the sense of luxurious.

130. *Byzant domes:* like those characteristic of the city of Byzantium or Constantinople, where the Saracenic style of architecture modified the Greek. Because this style was Pagan, it would be considered demon-

built in Italy and mysteriously accursed, so that only in a country like Sicily, which was peopled by Saracens, Normans, and cosmopolitans, attracted by its older civilization, would it be much found at this period.

132. *Dandolo:* George, the blind Doge of Venice, chosen in 1192, at the age of 72. In 1198 he led, with Baldwin of Flanders, the fourth crusade, for which the Republic of Venice had furnished the transports to Constantinople. He ransacked the Orient for art treasures, bringing back with him pillars from world-famous temples, which he had set up in St. Mark's; the four horses of St. Mark's were among these spoils.

136. *Sardius:* Carnelian stone.

220. *Bulb dormant:* it was an Egyptian custom to bury with embalmed bodies hyacinth bulbs in sign of the life to come.

240. *Made bold by Salinguerra's absence:* as already told, see note **I. 155.**

244. *The end of the siege:* the siege of Ferrara, see note **I. 165, 171.** Richard's capture, of course, was not yet accomplished.

262. *You mind:* recalling the opening of the poem.

272. *Rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore by Hildebrand:* that is, restore the claim of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor to protect the Church, whereas Hildebrand's policy was rather to make the Empire dependent on the Church, all power, temporal and spiritual, centring in the Pope instead of in the Emperor.

290. *The carroch:* Eribert, Archbishop of Milan, invented the carroccio, modelling it upon the Ark of the Covenant, during the war of his city with the Emperor Conrad II., and it was adopted by all the Italian cities. It was a four-wheeled car, painted red, drawn by four yokes of oxen, dressed in red clothes to their heels; a very high mast, with a golden ball, also painted red, stood in the midst. Below, between two white veils, floated the standard of the commune, and below that again was a crucifix. A platform in front carried

some of the bravest soldiers appointed for its defence. Another platform in the rear held musicians and trumpeters. Mass was said upon the carroccio before it left town, and frequently a special chaplain was attached to it.

295-300. *Enough. Now turn*, etc.: each town, whatever party was nominally in power, usually had adherents of the other party in it, ready to support its exiled leaders; and in Verona at this moment, when the town was taking part for Richard, there was evidently another armament secretly preparing to aid the besieged city of Ferrara. In this Palma would be secretly interested; hence the declaration to her, — "Ferrara's succored, Palma."

302. *Tiso Sampier:* or Campo Sam Pierre or Pietro, of a family with whom Ecelin was in bitter feud, though once friends, Ecelin's outrage against Maria di Camposanpietro (see note I. 458) being a retaliation for a similar outrage. It was probably an elder Tiso of the same house who was slain in 1222, according to Muratori, in Salinguerra's successful attack upon the Este faction in Ferrara; and this Tiso was doubtless eager for revenge.

313. *Agnes' milk:* Agnes Este was Palma's mother, Ecelin her father.

361. *Cesano:* a city which Dante describes as "changing sides" "in constant partisan," living 'twixt tyrant power and liberty, where "the green talons grasp the land," *i. e.*, the power of the Romanos for the Emperor. "Inferno," xxvii. 47–52.

382. *The insupĕrable Tuscan:* Adelaide, Ecelin's wife, the wise lady of Goito.

429. *The orb I sought to serve:* Dante's Cunizza, whom he places in the third heaven of the planet Venus ("Paradise," ix. 13–36), Browning has had in mind in his Palma, with whom he identifies her as the sister of Ecelin the terrible, and daughter of Ecelin the monk, and also as devoted to love, which, as he shows, Palma early determined to serve.

430. *Fomalhaut:* a star of the first magnitude in the Southern Fish, evidently associated here (as in Dante's astronomy in "Purgatory" i. 19–21 foll.: "The fair planet which incites to love was making all the Orient to smile, veiling the Fishes that were in her train") with Venus, who was a fish-goddess, and whose glance is dominant over Dante's Cunizza and Browning's Palma. The planet Venus is in the sign of the Fishes at the Spring equinox, the season when Dante arrived on the shores of Purgatory.

449. *The first Knight who followed Conrad:* Ecelo, the adventurer who followed Conrad II. into Lombardy, as before explained.

460. *Saponian strength of Lombard grace:* that is, did the strength of the Saponi family, the founders of the Ecelins when they settled in Italy, despair of attaining the grace peculiar to their Lombard neighbors? The first Ecelo felt that habit was what made nature; so he discarded a part of what was natural to him to gain new qualities, retaining a part of the old strength as an advantage over his neighbors.

467. *Podestà among the Vicentines:* Ecelin's first office of Podestà over Vicenza was succeeded by power in Padua as his next step.

475. *Alberic:* the name of Palma's younger brother. Between the adventurer Ecelo and Ecelin I. the Stammerer, there is said to have been an earlier Alberic also. — *Lion's-crine:* lion's hair, tawny or golden; *crine,* from Latin *crinis,* hair.

488. *Adelaide of Susa:* Marchioness of Piedmont, which she governed with firmness and ability till it became the most important fief in Italy. She is said to have mediated effectively more than once between Pope and Emperor. Her daughter, Bertha, married the Emperor Henry IV.

491. *The superb Matilda's perfecting:* Countess Matilda of Tuscany, who granted the reversion of all her possessions (Mantua, Modena, Tuscany, Spoleto, and An-

cona) to the Holy See, first in the lifetime of Gregory VII. (Hildebrand), whose firm friend she was in his conflicts with the Empire, and afterward to Pope Paschal III. She was made Sovereign of all Italy in 1110, and died 1115. See Dante, "Paradiso," xxx.

493. *Our Adelaide:* Adelaide the Tuscan, to whom Taurello attributes the same sort of plan for the Emperor in keeping the Trentine Pass open for his pleasure, as that of Adelaide of Susa for the Pope in keeping open the pass leading over the Alps towards France.

501. *The Kaiser excommunicate:* see note **I. 198.**

515. *For the siege:* that is, of Ferrara.

545. *Weed:* dress.

554. *The alighted planet Pollux wore:* Pollux, son of Zeus by Leda, who, with his brother, Castor, took part in the quest for the Golden Fleece, and while a violent storm was going on, two globes of fire played about their heads, after which the storm was stilled. They are represented as riding on white horses with a star glittering on their helmets.

556. *Gate-vein:* see note **I. 346.**

587. *Verona's Lady:* Palma.

588. *Brennus, . . . like the first clamberer's,* etc.: a general of the Gauls who invaded Italy and marched to Rome, B. C. 385, where he climbed the Tarpeian Rock, and was about to enter the citadel; but the sacred geese gave the alarm, and later Manlius drove the Gauls back, not one being left to tell the tale.

596. *Platan:* a plane-tree, so named from its spreading breadth, to which quality in his poem Browning seems to refer.

597. *Archimage:* an arch-magician.

609. *Put aside — entrance thy synod:* that is, disclaim the entrance to the synod of the soul's own convening.

656. *Colibri:* humming-birds.

681. *Bassanese:* native of Bassano, the old seat of the Ecelini on the Brenta.

693. *Giudecca:* a Venetian canal.

738. *Fastuous:* haughty.

746. *Shent:* blamed; Anglo-Saxon *scendan.*

765. *Basilic:* the Basilica of St. Mark's in Venice.

766. *Corpus Domini:* Feast of the Body of the Lord, Sacrament Day, the Thursday following Trinity Sunday.

789. *Losel:* worthless fellow, a lose-all.

815. *Mugwort:* a plant of the genus Artemisia.

817. *Zin the Horrid:* the desert where no water was to be found. Numbers xx. 1.

822. *Potiphar's mishap:* Genesis xxxix.

823. *Earliest ass:* Numbers xxii. 28.

825. *Potsherd him, Gibeonites:* Joshua ix., x.

830. *Meribah:* Numbers xx. 13.

876. *The Piombi:* torture-cells under the roof of the Ducal Palace at Venice.

900. *Tempe's dewy vale:* in Thessaly, contrasted with this dusty minster town.

939. *Hercules . . . in Egypt:* Busiris, the king of Egypt, seized Hercules while in Egypt seeking the apples of the Hesperides, in order to sacrifice him to Jove, to whom he sacrificed all foreigners entering his country; but the hero burst his bonds and slew instead of being slain.

950. *My patron-friend:* Walter Savage Landor, the poet (1775–1864), whose praise was Browning's earliest and most important encouragement, and to whom the young poet here renders acknowledgment, speaking of his great verse as blaring on like his own trumpeter at Marathon, apparently celebrated by him in his "Idyllia Heroica," printed in Latin at Pisa in 1820. The allusion, as Mr. Alfred Forman points out in *The Athenæum* of Dec. 12, 1896, suggests Æschylus, whose military service at Marathon, Platæa, and Salamis were the "stimulants" to his drama of "The Persians," and who went to Sicily and gave his "Women of Ætna" under King Hiero's auspices, "who was then engaged in founding the city of Ætna," as Mr. Forman quotes from the ancient biographer of Æschylus. But also, in

a complimentary way, the allusion is double, suggesting Landor, and evidently referring to that poet's giving up his military service as colonel in Spain with the Spanish patriots against Napoleon I. When the restored King Ferdinand threw over the constitution he had agreed to uphold, Landor washed his hands of the struggle, "declaring that while he was willing to aid the Spanish people against the antagonist of Europe, he would have nothing to do with a perjurer and a traitor," and retired to Italy. His "Gebir Julian," etc., was published in 1831, "The Pentameron and the Pentalogia" in 1837, his heroic verse blaring unintermittent on, like that of a giant among his contemporaries. The lines following, "And did well, I acknowledged," etc., **955-959**, may refer to a personal reminiscence of a visit to him, where Ætna, looming dimly in sight all day, lay as if in blazing ruin at sunset, with little clouds tilting against it, "like Persian ships at Salamis."

961. *A flawless ruby*, etc.: King Polycrates of Samos grieved much over the loss of his most precious gem, which Amasis, King of Egypt, his friend, frightened by his unbroken luck, as likely to draw down the enmity of the gods against him, had advised him to throw into the sea. But even in this he was lucky, the sea returning it to him in the belly of a fish which had been presented to him.

965. *Your verse in place, an amulet:* a charm. It would seem as if Landor's sonnet — in which he said of Browning that no man since Chaucer had "walked along our roads with step so active, so inquiring eye, or tongue so varied in discourse" — was already known to Browning when he wrote this, and was here referred to, as it may have been. It was first published, however, in 1846.

967. *My English Eyebright:* referring to another of Browning's early friends, and whose name, Euphrasia, is the Greek equivalent for Eyebright.

991. *John the Beloved:* Saint John.

998. *Xanthus:* a disciple; see "A Death in the Desert."

1020. *Twy-prong . . . pastoral cross:* the one a forked stick used in magic, the other a stick branched to stand as a sacred symbol for the Cross.

IV. **23.** *Docks:* same as burdock. — *Quitchgrass:* couch-grass. — *Loathy mallows:* growing in ditches and in graveyards.

33. *Legate Montelungo:* representing Pope Gregory IX. in the coming conference, Gregorio di Montelungo.

41. *Tito:* the Imperial legate from Trent.

43. *Mainard:* a Tyrolese lord whose seat was at Görz in the Tyrol.

49. *Arbalist:* a cross-bow. — *Manganel:* a battering-ram. — *Catapult:* an engine for throwing stones and other projectiles.

62. *Crested gaunt white ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak:* the Ecelin crest.

71. *Jubilate:* Oh be joyful! Psalm lxvi. 1.

82. *Cautelous:* wary, from Old French *cautelle.*

83. *Old Redbeard:* Barbarossa. — *Sought from Azzo's sire to wrench vainly:* Alessandria, built by the League to defy Frederic I., who tried twice in vain to take it.

88. *Brenta and Bacchiglion:* rivers near Padua and Vicenza, the seats of the Ecelini.

91. *Cino:* the typical partisan Italian referred to, I. **145.**

95. *Concorezzi:* a noble family of Padua.

96. *San Vitale:* a little place near Vicenza.

143. *Messina marbles Constance took delight in:* statues in Messina, the Sicilian seat of the Emperors, which became part of their domain through the marriage of Henry VI., Frederic Barbarossa's son, and Constance, the Norman heiress to Sicily.

157. *The Fighter:* like *the Slave* of line **166,** a statue adorning Taurello's garden-terrace.

392. *If Palma knew what Salinguerra almost meant to do:* that is, probably, to assume the chief place himself.

436. *Basnet:* or bascinet, a light basin-shaped helmet.

469. *What past life did those flying thoughts pursue:* the account of Taurello here given may be summarized as follows: the family of Taurello was originally from Mantua, where it was the oldest; later at Ferrara, its only rival was the Adelardi, which led the Guelf faction, as the other the Ghibellin; the Estes did not interfere with Ferrara until Linguetta Marchesalla, left heiress of her house, was about to be married to Taurello, when a Guelf attack was made by the people of Ravenna on the town and the heiress carried off. The Count of St. Boniface (father of the Richard of the poem), before referred to, explains on their behalf that although not instructed by the Marquis of Este to do this, they had done it to prevent Ferrara from falling into the hands of Salinguerra, who he claimed was but a vassal of Azzo's (Azzo VI., the Azzo of the poem being Azzo VII.). Thereupon the elders of Ferrara felt it wise, since Taurello was but a lad, to invite Azzo to the city, and make the loss up to the young Taurello in other more convenient ways. While they got him off hunting, Azzo entered the city with the bride Linguetta. Taurello took refuge in the Court whence Barbarossa's son, Henry (afterward Henry VI.), married to Constance, ruled Sicily. There he thrived, married Retrude of Henry's own family, and suddenly returned to his ancestral town of Ferrara, powerfully befriended by the Emperor and Ecelin, to build a fine palace for his bride. Azzo and Boniface anticipating trouble took the initiative, and attacked Taurello and Ecelin when conferring together at Vicenza, where Ecelin was Podestà. Here Retrude was mortally wounded and her child supposed to be lost; but the Guelfs were repelled at last. Taurello was attached as second to Ecelin in keeping control over Lombardy, adding to the ferocity of Ecelin his ability and astuteness, which with Adelaide's subtle strategy put the Ecelini at a greater advantage than before over the Este party. In vain did Henry or Philip

urge Taurello forward, and he remained most usefully in the shade during the reign of Otho IV., Henry's successor, and that of Frederick II. Easily learned in Greek and Arabic, accomplished in art and music and poetry, he added a carelessness about his accomplishments as well as about his ability as a warrior, using all these attributes as a means to read other men instead of to display himself.

481. *Blacks and Whites:* the Neri, the Blacks or Guelfs; the Bianchi, the Whites or Ghibellins. The same party names are still used in Italy, but the Papal or Guelf party is now the aristocratic and conservative party, the Whites the royal and more progressive party.

504. *Goshawk:* a kind of falcon used in hunting.

578. *Heinrich:* Henry VI., Emperor, 1190–1197.

579. *Philip:* Emperor, contestant of Otho's claim, 1197–1208.

584. *Otho:* Otho IV., who attempted to displace Barbarossa's son, the young Frederick, afterwards Frederick II. He gained the support of the Pope for a time, and acted as Emperor 1208–1212, when Frederick was crowned. He died, 1250.

603. *Jove trined for her:* Jupiter the planet assumed a trinal aspect, that is, was placed in such a relation with a second planet as to make the angle they subtend with the earth an angle of 120 degrees or a third of the Zodiac, which is supposed in astrology, in which Adelaide was learned, to be an auspicious aspect.

604. *From Friedrich's path,* etc.: the inner history of the second Frederick's delay of the promised crusades is, of course, a theme beyond the ken of the regular historian; and whether the poet is right in here attributing to Adelaide the Tuscan the scheming power behind the incidents of this time which brought the Emperor in open conflict with the Pope, there is no means of knowing from any better historical authority than Browning himself. His may be the best possible, since his insight plus his study makes him the likeliest one to reconstruct

the epoch aright. In this passage he supposes that Adelaide recognizing Taurello's ability, not only from the "mystic mark" she found upon his brow (see preceding line **441**) and the conjunction of astrological auspices referred to in line **603**, but also from the consequences of the attack upon Vicenza in which his child was reputed to be lost, seized her opportunity to employ Taurello in the furtherance of her plans for Italy, making him influence the Emperor to lend his prestige against the Crusades and toward the encouragement of Italian art. If so, John of Brienne had an enemy, and Guido the Bolognian, a friend whom they probably never knew.

608. *Guido the Bolognian:* not Guido Reni, but a less known painter of the twelfth century.

613. *Clove he not Tiso, last siege:* according to Muratori, in 1222, when the exiled party of Este, having been shut out from Ferrara by Salinguerra's success, collected outside the city and laid siege to it, "Salinguerra, the old fox, fearing lest the populace should rise against him (evidently on account of the rigors of the siege), sent to the Marquis, conceding to him to enter Ferrara, where concord between the parties might be amicably treated of. The marquis fell unsuspiciously into the net, and with one hundred noblemen of his party he entered the city. Thereupon Salinguerra, raising a rumor that the newcomers insolently seized upon provisions and committed other outrages, shouted 'To arms, to arms!' Some of the visitors had the good fortune of escaping along with the Marquis; the others were slain, and among these Tisolino of Campo San Pietro, a most noble Paduan knight, was stopped while retiring by the peasants of a village named Girzola or Guzola (and was killed). For all this the Marquis of Este did not even yet learn to know whether Salinguerra was a person to be trusted." Commenting on this reference of Browning to Tiso's death, Mr. W. M. Rossetti says, "This does not seem to be historical, for, as we have just seen, it was not Salinguerra in person, but the peasantry of a

village, who did to death the Paduan champion." Exact is this, but perhaps unnecessarily literal on Mr. Rossetti's part, since Browning is showing throughout this passage Salinguerra's ability in various ways to understand and make use of men. Muratori himself, who is evidently Guelfian and decidedly Estian in his sympathies, labors under no doubt about referring to the right source this deed of prowess in which the unlucky Tiso suffered. This sort of military dexterity, apart from mere athletic feats, distinguished Taurello over Ecelin, as Muratori shows as well as Browning. Taurello's mode of opening the way for his enemy to get himself into a box and then being ready to put down the lid on him, Browning makes good use of again in showing how craftily he proceeded in letting Richard make the betrothal with Palma easy to break, and finally also, as in history, in inducing him to make it easy to capture him. It may be added here that Browning did not miss, as Mr. Rossetti supposed, "the fact emphasized by Muratori, that Azzo barely escaped from a stratagem laid by Salinguerra to take him prisoner, when, in I. 161, after telling how Salinguerra returned and took Ferrara, he adds merely, "Azzo fled." He simply does not make use of it, nor would he there in any case, because he is speaking of an event prior to the siege, namely, of the retaking of Ferrara, upon which, as Muratori also says (see note, I. 155), "Azzo . . . was obliged to quit the city." This "stratagem" belongs to the siege of Ferrara which followed. One of its incidents, Tiso's death, is here referred to as taking place "*last* siege." See notes I. 165, 171.

633. *Old Azzo:* Azzo VI., predecessor of Aldrovandino, his son, who was succeeded by the Azzo VII. of the poem. — *And old Boniface:* Richard, father of the Richard of the poem. Both these elders of their respective houses dying left as their heirs Guglielm or William Boniface and Aldrovandino Este, who died three years later, and were succeeded by Richard and

Azzo VII. — *Entrapped by Ponte Alto:* the old bridge. Muratori gives an account of a similar trap, not of the elder Este, but of the son Aldrovandino and Richard. It may not be the same.

639. *At bay as 't were:* Muratori admits that "some years later, 1215, Azzo's authority waned in Ferrara, because that of the Ghibellin Salinguerra grew overmuch."

696. *My old compeer:* Salinguerra, musing of the past, speaks thus of Ecelin. He recalls, first, the attack upon them both by Azzo the elder at Vicenza, when Ecelin, the athlete, followed the counsel given him by himself, who added to the power of brawn the power of brain as well. He scornfully contrasts his fighting partner's present penitential piety with his old-time vigor, and then recurs to the onslaught with which he, Taurello, rallied their side and repelled the attack of the Guelfs on the night that the archer saved Ecelin's son and his own was lost. He next muses that Adelaide's death and the death of the elder Azzo, replaced by this Azzo, leave him still to manage and fight for the Emperor's side. He remembers how Otho was forced to doff the crown in such a juncture as this, and he returns to the perplexity of finding some Head to take Ecelin's place, and cogitates on the curious fact that the Ecelini hold a dominant position, although six out of every twelve men will surpass an Ecelin in capacity. He glances on his own qualities to take such a place, and brings to mind Henry's singling him out for it, as a young man, and mating him with Retrude while Constance stood looking on. He reveals the fact that the Emperor's ambassador, Tito, had clearly intimated that he was now the man to fill the post Ecelin had left, but confesses his own reluctance to leave the rôle of almost unhonored ability fate seems to have bound him to, and adverts to the curious circumstance that with all his ability he lacks the quality of attracting other men's acknowledgment of it. It is like the aloes overgrowing

the Moorish lentisk, which was conquered, though the one had been cherished and the others tramped out. He concludes his soliloquy by scornfully refusing to take his old comrade's place away from his children, his unusual quality of enthusiasm of idea being exactly the merit, as Browning thereupon observes, which discredits his worldly success.

719. *Scapular:* or scapulary, a monk's garment made to go over the shoulders and down the breast in two long strips.

720. *Cowl:* a hood attached to a monk's habit.

726. *Pilio and Brenardo:* probably men on the Guelf side.

727. *San Biagio:* near Vicenza.

730. *Bassanese:* men of Bassano, Ecelin's town.

821. *This poor minstrel:* Sordello, of course, is here alluded to.

825. *Moorish lentisk:* the mastic tree, *Pistacia lentiscus*, growing on the African coasts of the Mediterranean.

826. *Aloes:* fleshy evergreen plants common in Italy.

834. *His son's besotted youth gives promise of the . . . tiger-tooth:* Ecelin III., whose reckless cruelty is proverbial.

864. *Some Ethiop*, etc.: this elaborate simile Mr. Arthur Symons adduces as an example of the subtle poetic quality of the descriptive passages in "Sordello." It follows upon the reference to the Moorish lentisk, with which it is in keeping. Like the Ethiop, Taurello is too personally safe and generous and lazy to act upon all the promptings his busy mind finds amusement in imagining.

960. *Crescentius Nomentanus:* a patriotic leader of the family of the counts of Tusculum, who revived, about 980, the republic of old Rome, with all its institutions of senate and consulship. He was elected consul, wore the white dress of that Roman office, and for a time was

borne on the crest of popular favor, dictating the policy of the Commonwealth to its advantage in order and security, ruling the Popes, exiling one, John XV., and putting one of his own nomination, a Greek, John XVI., in opposition to John XV.'s successor, Gregory V., the nominee of the young Emperor Otho III.

966. *Till Innocent bade me relinquish,* etc.: Innocent III., Pope 1198, who took measures against the anti-Sacerdotalism rampant during his papacy, and made strict rules against the uncelibate monks.

975. *A valgar priest and a vile stranger . . . Pope John, King Otho:* John XV., Otho III.

989. *A phanal:* a beacon-light.

994. *They crucified their Consul:* Crescentius was besieged in the fortress of St. Angelo (see also **1014**), where he took refuge from Otho, and drawn by an offer of safety to come out, was crucified, his wife, Stephania, maltreated, and his Greek Pope put to torture in 998. Stephania is said to have poisoned Otho in revenge.

1013. *Rome of the Pandects:* that is, of the code digested and arranged by order of Justinian (527–565).

V. 6. *Palatine:* from the Latin *palatinus,* a dweller in the palace, having the right of rulership.

15. *Mooned sandal:* the crescent-toed shoe of the mediæval man of rank.

16. *Atria:* the main hall in a Roman house.

17. *Stibadium:* the Roman reclining couch used in the baths.

18. *Lustral vase:* holding the lustral water for purification at meals, etc.

42. *Obsidion:* a volcanic product, black and glassy.

43. *Fulgurant:* flashing with lightning, as became the god of the thunderbolt.

57. *Mauritanian tree:* citrus-wood, growing in North Africa, in Mauritania, a costly wood much prized by the Romans.

60. *Demiurge:* an instrument or creature of God,

through whom he creates; a name used by the Neoplatonist philosophers for the second person of the Trinity, or more commonly as a worker for the people.

66. *Mareotic juice from Cæcuban:* wine from Lake Mareotis in Egypt, choicer than wine from Cæcubum, a town in the province of Latium.

81. *Pythoness:* a priestess of Apollo.

82. *A Lydian King's distress:* Crœsus, the rich King of Lydia, interpreted in favor of himself an obscure oracle made to him at Delphi, which was fulfilled in the destruction of his kingdom by Cyrus, King of Persia. Herodotus, i. 26.

109. *Alcamo:* a poet of Palermo in Sicily, 1112–1178.

111. *Nina:* the Italian Sappho, predecessor of Alcamo, one of the first to write verse in Sicilian. Dean Church gratuitously supposes that Browning makes Nina a man instead of a woman.

112. *Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er and o'er:* Nina was said to be in love with a poet she never saw, whose name was Dante, and of whom she wrote, calling herself continually the Nina of Dante.

132. *Charlemagne:* the first of the Holy Roman Emperors of the Western line, 800–814, establisher of social order in the beginning of western civilization under the feudal system, and standing for "strength" or physical force.

144. *Priests for castellans and popes for suzerains:* Browning points out that the next step in civilization came about through the formation in the church of a similar order, like a feudal system, where the priests were like castellans, governors of castles, the popes like suzerains or feudal over-lords.

162. *Hildebrand:* this famous arch-deacon, ruler behind the popes for years, himself becoming Pope Gregory VII., in 1073, sees and takes this next step, for which the world was ready, declaring God's Church independent of a king's investiture (line **154**), controlling the Emperor, and standing for "Feeling," or the

assertion of soul force in the social order, to "work knowledge by stress of strength."

173. *Mandrake:* a plant with a forked root, the subject of various superstitions arising from its fancied resemblance to man. It was said to shriek with pain when pulled from the earth, and is here likened to Hildebrand on account of his painful intensity, a "fruit of suffering's excess."

184. *The three Imperial crowns:* Bryce, in his "Holy Roman Empire," says: "By the crowning at Aachen [that is, Aix-la-Chapelle], the old Frankish capital, the monarch became 'king,' formerly 'King of the Franks' or 'King of the Eastern Franks,' now, since Henry II.'s time, 'King of the Romans, always Augustus.' At Monza (or, more rarely, at Milan) in later times, at Pavia in earlier times, he became King of Italy or of the Lombards; at Rome he received the double crown of the Roman Empire, double as 'urbis et orbis' [of the city and the world]. . . . These four crowns furnish matter of endless discussion to the old writers; they tell us the Roman was golden, the German silver, the Italian [Lombard] iron. Others say that of Aachen is iron and the Italian silver, and give elaborate reasons. . . . No doubt the allegory created the fact, and all three were of gold (or gilded silver), though in that of Italy there was and is inserted a piece of iron, — a nail, it was believed, of the true Cross."

186. *Alexander:* the Pope of Hildebrand's making, 1061, Alexander II. — *Innocent:* the third, 1198, to whose charge Frederick II. was intrusted as a child, on Barbarossa's death. He advanced the claims of the Church even beyond Hildebrand's dreams.

187. *Each Papal key:* the insignia of Rome, referring to the giving to Saint Peter of the keys of heaven and hell.

192. *The hermit Peter's cry at Claremont:* Peter the monk, who called the Christian world to the first crusade, formally instituted in 1095 at Clermont, a city of

France, by Pope Urban II. Browning sees in the crusades the evidence of the working in the world of the same spirit that moved Hildebrand, and which makes him call the crusades a device for "breeding strength by other aid than strength," that is, eliciting strength by means of moral ideas.

197. *Harangue of Vimmercato:* the call at Vimmercato, a town near Milan, for a league against Frederick I. In this and the second league's united action against Frederick II., as related in this poem, Browning sees, again, evidence of social progress of a plan to turn "strength against pernicious strength," that is, to check autocratic power in the general interest of Italy.

201. *From Mantuan Albert making cease the fierce ones:* Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who acted as umpire between Pope and Emperor.

202. *Saint Francis:* of Assisi (1182–1226), founder of the Franciscan Order, who gave up his inheritance (1206), and devoted his life with singular purity of aim and fervent piety to subdue the materialism of the world, and help the common people of Italy. "Franciscanism," says Milman, "was the democracy of Christianity." In these men and the movement they inspired, Browning sees the next step in social betterment finding place in mediæval civilization in the Truce of God, by which the warring world agreed to suspend hostilities during mass on Sundays and festivals, and from Advent to Epiphany and Quinquegesima Sunday to Pentecost — a device by which the very use of physical force was beginning to be superseded.

279. *Hacqueton:* a quilted jacket worn under armor.

296. *Trabea:* a Roman toga ornamented with horizontal purple stripes.

298. *Fasces:* a bundle of rods tied with an axe in the middle, borne before Roman magistrates as a sign of authority.

379. *Thyrsus:* a spear or staff with a cone on top and wound with ivy as a sign of Bacchic service; an innocent,

idle sort of spear, to which emblem Sordello resigns himself as one best befitting a poet.

386. *Corslet:* a light armor for the breast.

400. *Baldric:* an ornamental strap worn over the shoulder as a badge of office.

447. *Caliph's wheel-work man:* the mechanical contrivances, automatons, etc., of the famous Eastern Caliph Haroun al Raschid (756–809), patron of the literature, art, and budding sciences of the time, were the awe and wonder of the middle ages. He sent a manikin of this sort as a gift to Charlemagne.

502. *Typhon:* a monster, son of Gæa, the Earth, who disputed the authority of Zeus or Jupiter.

554. *Jupiter? No! Saturn:* the Roman Jupiter, like the Greek Zeus, succeeded Saturn, possibly the same as the Greek Cronus, in the lordship of the universe. According to the ancient mythology, the origin of the gods began with the organization of the world from shapeless matter. From Chaos sprung Night and Erebus, Light and Day. Uranus, Heaven, and Gæa, Earth, then arise, and from their union spring the warring Titans; finally one of these, Cronus or Saturn, gains the main authority. Browning makes Sordello use this account of creation to illustrate the evolution, by successive stages, of order and enlightenment.

592. *Friedrich with his red-hot tomb:* this whole passage is descriptive of what Dante did in the "Divine Comedy." Frederick II. he placed in one of the fiery open tombs in the city of flame. "Inferno," x. 120.

593. *Dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph:* chosen 590 A. D., by Theodolinda, to be ruler of Lombardy and successor of her husband Authari. He asserted his power over Ravenna and Rome, dominating Pope Gregory, and ruling twenty-five years in peace. Whether or not Dante has referred to him in some blind way, seized upon by Browning here, we have not ascertained. His dubiousness may consist in his never renouncing the heresy of his forefathers, though he

nominally became a Trinitarian, and in his never quite establishing an empire in Italy, although near it.

595. *Matilda I enshrine with languors of the planet of decline:* Dante, approaching the earthly Paradise, meets Matilda, the famous Countess of Tuscany. She leads him on in place of Virgil, who is not permitted to go farther, and he describes her as shooting upon him the splendor of the glances of Cytherea or Venus, the planet companioning the setting and rising sun. "Purgatory," xxviii. 53–64.

645. *Libyan god:* probably an image of Seth or Set, the snouted god, representing the principle of evil, the opponent of Osiris.

647. *Clay cinerary pitcher:* such as was used to hold the ashes of the dead who were burned on funeral pyres.

648. *Byzant rifled:* see note III. **132.** Thebes in Egypt, where the famous temple of the Egyptian religion stood, and the Athens of the Parthenon, as well as ancient Rome and Constantinople, were all ransacked for treasures to adorn St. Mark's.

649. *Reputed consummations: reputed* is here used in the sense of widely famed. — *Razed a seal:* effaced the sign of special possession; that is, the consummate or supreme products of known reputation, crowning the civilizations of different nations, were reft of their marks of ownership by those civilizations, and blent with the all-comprehending symbol of Venice, the Triad at St. Mark's.

650. *Triad:* statues on St. Mark's of the three patron saints of Venice, St. Mark, St. Pantaleon, St. Lawrence Justiniani.

718. *Writhled:* wrinkled or drawn, not plumped out.

723. *Pauldron:* a detachable piece of plate-armor to protect the shoulder.

757. *Retrude, the frail mother,* etc.: this passage has apparently not been clear to readers generally, perhaps because it has not been noticed that she, Retrude, Sordello's mother, is the subject of the whole sentence from

line 752 to 771, the reference to Adelaide being parenthetical ("failed Adelaide see then who was the natural chief, the man of men?"). Retrude's child, Sordello, is still the infant referred to in 767, after this mention of Adelaide. The subject of the new sentence beginning "A new shape," 771, is Adelaide. She it was whom Palma sympathetically pictures as the "new shape" seen by the little new-born baby Sordello's haggard eyes, leaning over "a familiar shape," that of his unconscious mother, Retrude. Adelaide it was who, just having discerned in the tumult of that night's attack, that not her husband, Ecelin, but his lieutenant, Taurello, was the better man — the real chief, at once perceives in Retrude's helpless condition and the general circumstances, her chance to take Sordello away from his parents and keep his origin a secret. She "gloatingly bent o'er his discomfiture," with her divining eyes, seeing on his head the wreaths of rank and fortune to which his parentage predestined him. Among these wreaths of honor one, that of the Imperial Representative in Italy, which would otherwise be her child's, the little Ecelin's, she now fears, having seen Salinguerra's superiority, would come to be Sordello's. She would be filled with "scorn, hate, rage," too late, if she did not now seize that moment; otherwise the House of Salinguerra would never be outrivalled.

834. *Native of Gesi:* Frederick II. was born in Gesi, a city in the Italian province of Ancona.

859. *Samminiato . . . secures us Florence . . . in Pisa's case:* that is, to secure Samminiato, the hill commanding Florence secures that city, as securing Florence secures Pisa as well, which is at the mouth of the Arno a little below Florence.

862. *Pistoia:* in Tuscany, north of Florence.

864. *Brescia . . . Milan, Piacenza:* three cities of North Italy, marking a triangular advance westward in Lombardy from the Venetian province, where the power of the Ecelins was centred.

867. *Romagna and Bologna, whose first span covered the Trentine and the Valsugan:* spreading out from the Trentine Pass along the valley of the Adige, where the Ecelin power took its start originally toward the Valsugan region along the Brenta road from Trent to Venice.

869. *Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure:* by an alliance or Sofia Ecelin with Henry of Egna, and now his widow, the passage by Bolgiano was insured to the Ghibellins.

891. *The Torriani:* a Lombard faction of Valsassina, struggling against the Visconti, the Ghibellin family to which Otho Visconti, the archbishop of Milan (1262), belonged.

969. *Break up Hildebrand, rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne:* break up the temporal power of the Papacy and build up the Empire again, but in a new way, combining with the old strength new knowledge,— this was Taurello's dream for his and Sordello's joint accomplishment.

989. *Drive Trent upon Apulia:* drive their advantage at Trent in North Italy down into Apulia in South Italy.

993. *To Palma, Dante spoke with in the clear amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere, — Cunizza, as he called her:* a confession that Browning founds his Palma on Dante's Cunizza, whom Dante places in the sphere of Venus, and whom he makes declare herself as sprung from one root with "the firebrand that sorely shent the region between Rialto and the fountain springs of Brenta and Piava," that is, as sister of Ecelin III., son of Ecelin the Monk, and confessing herself as overcome by the influence of the planet Venus upon her. "Paradise," ix. 25–36.

1012. *Naddo's never gone:* a last hit at the conventional critic from whom Browning suffered and still suffers misunderstanding.

1014. *Squarcialupo:* the moralistic romancer before mentioned. — *Purulent:* corrupt, maturated.

1025. *Hermit-bee:* a species of Apidæ, solitary in its

habits, to which Sordello is here likened, as leaving Palma — "this Eve's maiden," likening her to the moon — unregarded. So the martyr, true to dreams of Heaven, leaves his virgin-love alone on earth, and may be blamed for that despite his faith and victory. The whole is a vague forewarning of the poet's that this apparently imminent happy union of Sordello and Palma is to be frustrated through Sordello himself.

VI. **99.** *Jacinth:* or hyacinth, or garnet, red crystals formed in geodes. — *Lodestone:* an oxide of iron having magnetic power.

100. *Flinders:* splinters of minerals.

140. *Cydippe:* referred by earlier annotators to the story of Cydippe and Acontius, for Agathon, in Ovid's "Metamorphoses." We fail to see any pertinence. Cydippe and Agathon are supposititious persons harassed and tripped up by obstacles become comparatively innocent later.

181. *Dularete:* probably a priest or priestess of a Bacchic species of religious cult.

318. *Brakes at balm-shed:* ferns at time of shedding their seed.

348. *The sluggish asp:* the emblem of death drinking the last drop of life-blood, which stains the cowl this serpent has, and makes its dull eyes kindle.

381. *Reate:* a water weed.

382. *Grail:* yellow gravel.

411. *Citrine-crystals:* a kind of quartz, yellowish and pellucid. — *Pyropus-stone:* a fiery-red carbuncle.

426. *Titan:* probably refers to the constellation of Orion.

427. *Centaur:* the constellation called the Centaur in the southern hemisphere of the heavens.

455. *Brutus:* a reference, perhaps, to the feigned insanity of Lucius Brutus when in the presence of Tarquin, to save himself from the violence of that king, while at other times he worked to bring about the overthrow of the kingdom and the establishment of a republic.

583. *The king-bird,* etc.: the Egyptian Phœnix sacred to Osiris, which travels to Heliopolis to die once in five hundred years, appearing in gold and crimson plumes at the temple of the Sun, where it buries its father, enclosing it in an egg of myrrh. Herodotus, ii. 73. As there is never but one Phœnix, of course this is virtually a curious way of saying that it buries itself before rising again every five hundred years. Dante refers to it, "Inferno" xxiv. 103.

606. *Old fable, the two eagles:* Jove's golden eagles, according to Pindar, Fourth Pythian Ode, were placed near the sacred tripod; thence one flew east and the other west till they met again at Pytho or Delphi.

621. *The hermit-bee,* etc.: a return of the simile already glanced at **V. 1025** (see note on same). The hermit-bee of Goito, that is, Sordello, stops his busy toil; the "soft small unaffrighted bee," that is, Palma, accepts the hard event, and harbors no grudge against him as they shut him in the font at Goito, where he lies thenceforth with his mother Retrude, the Emperor's daughter.

640. *Our chief made some frank overture:* Muratori says that "the leaders of Lombardy exerted themselves so much that they procured the release of Richard," 1225.

673. *So hushed he up this evening's work:* Browning clearly intimates that his story of Sordello is his own invention, or has but the warrant of this obscure chronicle. The various accounts given of Sordello, besides being conflicting and self-destructive in their evidence, are not at all illuminating in relation with the poem, and do not need to be cited.

687. *Campese:* near Bassano on the Brenta.

688. *Solagna:* a village near Vicenza.

698. *In Verona half the souls refuse allegiance to the Marquis and the Count:* Muratori puts it in this way: Richard returned to his city of Verona: but only a few months passed ere many nobles and leading men of his

faction in that city, corrupted by Salinguerra's money, united with the Montecchi [of the same family as the Montagues of "Romeo and Juliet"], Ghibellins, and expelled him. Then it was that Ecelino da Romana, who, in closest league with Salinguerra, bore a part in these negotiations, hurried to Verona to reinforce the Montecchi, and began to exercise some little authority in the city.

730. *She captured him in his Ferrara,* etc.: Muratori says that in 1240 the Pope was "incited by means of Gregorio da Montelungo [before referred to], his legate, with the Lombards, the Venetians, and the Marquis of Este, to form the siege of Ferrara, the Doge of Venice, Jacopo Tiepolo, attending in person. and the Marquis of Este . . . The siege lasted from the beginning of February to the close of May, or indeed until 3 June; nor did any likelihood appear of forcing the city to surrender. Recourse was had to . . . gaining over by money . . . the leading men of Ferrara. Fair terms were proposed, and Salinguerra came to the camp to ratify them . . . and was entrapped by the Pontifical legate . . . a man of great activity but of lax conscience. . . . Thus Salinguerra, now an octogenarian, was transferred as a prisoner to Venice, where, treated courteously, he ended his days in holy peace." Milman says in his "History of Latin Christianity," bk. x. chap. iv., that the Venetians seized his person by an act of flagrant treachery, and that he languished five years in a Venetian prison.

764. *Gray wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin:* the elder son of Ecelin the Monk (1194–1259), small and thin, and so cruel that the Paduans, whose town he stormed in 1237, nicknamed him the devil's son. In 1259, Ecelin's outraged Ghibellin confederates having joined with the Guelfs against him, he was defeated and taken, sorely wounded, and imprisoned in the town formerly belonging to the Ecelini, Bassano; he refused to take food, and tearing the bandages from his wounds died.

Dante places him in the seventh circle, in a lake of blood among the tyrants given to blood and rapine. "Inferno," xii. 110. Ariosto calls him a child of hell. "Orlando Furioso," iii. 33.

765. *Massy-muscled big-boned Alberic:* this second son of Ecelin the monk, who was made Podesta of Vicenza in 1236, after the victory of that year over Azzo VII., is described as huge of frame, and, although less cruel, detested by the Lombards for his libertinism, the one vice his brother is said to have lacked.

769. *Anointed . . . kings of the gag,* etc.: Ecelin called himself the "scourge of God," and after the complete subjugation of Padua in 1237, signalized his conquest by the greatest atrocities. The victory of the Emperor at Cortenuova the same year was a further encouragement to the Ecelini. They overran the whole northeast of Italy, seizing, imprisoning, and putting to the torture, on the slightest pretext, the most illustrious families of Verona and Padua, and other Lombard cities successively quelled.

772. *Lombards band together . . . saving Milan:* an unsuccessful crusade against Ecelin, which resulted in his victory at Torricella in 1258, and in the seizure both of Mantua and Brescia, was followed by a desperate uprising, in which even Ghibellins joined, in 1259. He was marching on to take Milan when the allied Lombards, intercepting his forces, surrounded him. He was wounded and captured. Astrologers had foretold him that Bassano would be fatal to him, and when he found the next day that he had been taken there to be imprisoned, he grew desperate, and refused food; finally he tore the bandages from his wounds, and died, on the eighth day after the battle.

776. *Valley Rù by San Zenon:* the following year, 1260, Alberic was besieged at his castle of San Zeno, in the Valley Rù of the Gaderthal, and his followers bought their own freedom by surrendering Alberic, his wife, six sons, and two daughters to his enemies, who,

in his presence and that of the whole army, cut off the lower garments of the women, bound them to stakes, and burned them alive; tore the sons to pieces, thrusting their limbs in his face; and last of all, tore his own flesh with pincers, and, as Browning says, tied him to the tail of a horse and dragged him to death.

781. *Raunce:* or rance, an obsolete early modern English term for a very hard kind of fine stone or gravel of marble.

788. *Cushats:* ring-doves or wood-pigeons. — *Chirre:* a word describing their cooing note.

823. *Sordello Prince Visconti:* the rhyming chronicle of Milan written by Aliprando, makes Sordello a member of the noble Visconti family, born at Goito; in early youth writing "The Treasure," a book becoming famous at twenty-five distinguishing himself as a soldier; and having attracted the love of Beatrice, sister of Ecelin III., and being followed by her, disguised as a page, from Verona to Mantua, finally married her. Later he went to France, was knighted by the King, and loaded with gifts; in short, reached, as Bard, Knight, and Gallant, the summit of the desires of the times.

847. *Hesperian fruit:* the apples of the Gardens of the Hesperides, guarded by dragons, located by the old legend in Africa. It was one of the twelve labors of Heracles to obtain them.

867. "*The few fine locks,*" etc.: Browning fancies a modern child at Asolo singing these words from Sordello's first poem, beating the nature-song of the lark, as almost the only token of the present fame of the great troubadour-knight.

883. *Rifle a musk-pod and 't will ache:* a poem like "Sordello," which attempts to reconstruct a historic movement in relation to an inner life, now forgotten, aims at an enduring fragrance like that of the musk-pod, and must have a similar pungency and strength.